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MIRABEAU

(*Photo, Giraudo*

THE PRISONER OF VINCENNES

THE EARLY LIFE OF MIRABEAU; SPENDTHRIFT, PROFLIGATE AND PRISONER

By

ERIC REDE BUCKLEY

Author of
"A Lily of Old France," "Monsieur Charles," etc.

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CHAPTER I

BOYHOOD

To enter in imagination the France of Louis XV is to make a voyage into a country whose customs, ideas and moral standards seem as incredibly remote from our own as, we may suppose, would those of the other side of the moon. True, all we know of the other side of the moon is confined to what we learn from Edgar Allen Poe's *Hans Pfaal*, and he tells us nothing save that words cannot picture the horrors that are wrought there. Sometimes, when studying its history, we almost feel inclined to say the same of eighteenth century France.

The King was practically absolute, although his edicts had to be registered by the Parliament of Paris; but this curb was not a very effective one, for if the Parliament opposed the King he could override its resistance by holding a *lit de justice*, and the Parliament had to bow to the King's will, much in the same way as an English Cathedral Chapter has to elect a Bishop named by the Crown in a *Congé d'elire* in England to-day. The Parliament of Paris, too, we must remember, was not an elective legislative body, but a corporation of lawyers chiefly concerned to maintain its own rights, dignities and privileges.

The nobles were a class apart, whose feudal rights weighed heavily on the farming, trading and labouring classes: and whose privileged

position enabled them to treat men of other classes with cruelty and injustice. As far as the classes below them were concerned, they were to a large extent above the law. Freedom of the subject, such as is provided in England by the *Habeas Corpus* Act, there was none: for by means of a *lettre de Cachet* anybody could at any moment be arrested, and kept in prison for years without being brought to trial, without even knowing the crime alleged against him.

A *lettre de cachet* was simply an order from the King to imprison a certain person, and it was no hard matter for a noble to obtain one from the minister, if he wished to remove some private enemy from his path. Sometimes the minister, when issuing a *lettre de cachet,* would leave a blank space in which the person who had obtained it could fill in the name of the man whom he wished to imprison. A terrible weapon, this, in the hands of a vindictive noble, for he could by means of it consign his enemy to prison without anybody save himself and the gaoler knowing what had become of the unhappy victim.

The high posts in the Church were mostly held by men who owed their preferment to family influence; and, even if some of the stories of their misdoings are untrue or exaggerated, there can be no doubt that many of them led openly scandalous and immoral lives: witness the Cardinal de Rohan who figured so prominently in the diamond necklace case in the days of Louis XVI, or the prelate whose peccadilloes the Duke de Richelieu so ruthlessly and humorously exposed.

The iniquity of the Court of Louis XV is a byword; no one was surprised to see the King attend Mass accompanied by his two mistresses,

the Duchess de Chateauroux and the Duchess de Lauraguais; the greatest in the land were not ashamed to curry favour with Mme. de Pompadour. Even Mirabeau's uncle, the worthy and virtuous Bailli de Mirabeau, did so, though he gained nothing by it, for he was not subservient enough. Mme. du Barry went so far as to make the Pope's Nuncio kiss her naked foot.

True, a great deal of formal lip-service was paid to religion. Many of the nobles were even, like the Marquis de Mirabeau, fiercely orthodox; but religion had little or no influence on their daily lives, and their morality was often in inverse ratio to their orthodoxy. There were, of course, exceptions such as the Duke de Penthièvres, but generally speaking the moral standards of the nobility were very low. Not all the nobles were even professedly religious, for influenced by Voltaire and the Encyclopædists many were sceptics at heart, if for prudential reasons they did not openly avow it: but unfortunately their scepticism made them no more moral than orthodoxy did their more faithful or more credulous brethren.

The convents were usually ruled over by ladies of noble family who had taken the veil, not because they felt called to a religious life, but because as abbess or prioress of a wealthy convent they would be "suitably provided for". The picture which Diderot gives of convent life in his novel, *La Religieuse*, may be—probably is—overdrawn, but there can be no doubt that scandals were many, and that things often happened within convent walls strangely at variance with what is commonly supposed to be the way of life of a religious community. The ease with which Mme. de Monnier kept Mirabeau concealed in her room in the Convent at Gien suggests

that such goings on were not as uncommon as the charitably minded would fain believe.

Indeed, the social life of eighteenth century France is full of the strangest contradictions, and manifests not exactly hypocrisy, but an extraordinary tenacity in preserving in theory rules which in practice were violated and which everybody knew were violated. Laws of the utmost severity stood on the Statute book, but were rarely if ever executed. For instance, if a wife was unfaithful to her husband he could confine her for life in a convent, but few were the husbands who availed themselves of the right, though many had cause to do so.

There was a rigorous censorship of the press, and no book could be published in France without the licence of the censor; but books which the censor would never have licensed, if printed abroad, circulated freely and were openly hawked about the streets of Paris. Some of these—the famous Encyclopædia, for instance—even found their way into the King's Palace. In this, as in many other ways, illegalities were winked at so long as appearances were kept up.

The power of the father of the family over his children was very great; he disposed of them almost as if they were chattels. Marriages were arranged by the parents, and the bride and bridegroom sometimes never saw one another till the day before their marriage. No doubt, natural affection and the mother's influence generally softened and moderated the extreme rigour of paternal authority, but in the hands of a selfish, self-willed, self-opinionated man it was apt to become a grinding tyranny.

Mirabeau was in many respects, as most of us are, the child of his age, while it was partly

his rebellion against some of the conventions of the period which caused his misfortunes.

The first impression which the study of his early life produces on an Englishman of the twentieth century is that he was both extraordinarily able and extraordinarily evil. He was deceitful, treacherous, untrustworthy, dishonest and precociously immoral: all this must be obvious to anyone who studies the correspondence of the various members of his family, several of whom were prolific letter-writers. No longer is it possible to regard him as the high-souled, persecuted hero he depicts himself in the letters he wrote from the dungeon of Vincennes, though even in these his moral obliquity leads him into making damaging revelations: if, to some extent, he still remains a romantic figure, he is, it must be admitted, a sadly tattered and besmirched hero.

Yet he was not all evil; he was courageous both to do and to suffer; he had a marvellously acquisitive mind and a political foresight rarely surpassed; his hatred of tyranny and injustice was genuine, and though his conduct was for the most part selfish and unscrupulous he did at times display a certain generosity of soul. Above all, he was treated harshly and unjustly by his father, and suffered greatly; he was a man sinned against as well as sinning, so that not all the evil he did must be laid to his sole account—his father must bear a share of the responsibility.

His courage, his indefatigable energy and the wonderful personal charm which endeared him to nearly every one with whom he came in contact—nobles and peasants, men and women people of all ages and all classes—are hard to

reconcile with the view that he was merely a portent of evil. Even to-day, when all his misdoings are known, all his insincerities unveiled, it is difficult not to fall inder his spell, not to feel that in happier circumstances he might have been a different and a better man, and that with all his faults there was in him something noble and lovable.

Maybe, it is but the glamour of his ardent and vivid personality, but whatever the cause, the fact remains that he is a man whom it is difficult to hate or despise, easy to admire and forgive, knowing as we do that he had all the qualities which should make a man both odious and despicable. His literary works are little read; his political achievements, great as they were, are merely a matter of history; his marvellous personal charm survives.

At the time of his birth, Louis XV was still "Louis the well beloved", and the old regime seemed as firmly established as ever; but disintegrating forces were at work. Rousseau was already writing, and the Encyclopædia was soon to appear, so that Mirabeau grew up in a world ripening for revolution, and himself became the very incarnation of the spirit of the age. It was said of him: "He is the revolution"—an epigram which contains more truth than epigrams usually do. On the other hand, he was a noble and, though he pretended to sneer at noble birth, it was perhaps the haughty class-consciousness which he had inherited that gave him the lofty self-confidence by which he was able to sway the mob and browbeat his opponents.

Honoré Gabriel Riquetti, Count de Mirabeau, was born at Bignon on the 9th of March, 1747, and one might truly say that the first, perhaps

the greatest of all his misfortunes, was his parentage.

His father—Victor Riquetti, Marquis de Mirabeau—was a man of considerable importance in his day; he was commonly known as "the Friend of Men", a soubriquet he obtained from a book he had written bearing that title. The book was a treatise on political economy, for the Marquis was a prominent member of the group of men, called economists or physiocrats, whose writings attracted a good deal of attention in their day. Unfortunately the Marquis was not content to write books on economic theory; he tried to put his theories in practice on his own property, with the result that he squandered a large part of his patrimony.

He was a proud man, with a great belief in the antiquity and importance of his family and "a mania for posterity", as his brother expressed it. This led him to regard his son, not so much as an individual with a life of his own to live, but rather as a means whereby the great, ancient and noble family of Riquetti might be perpetuated. The Marquis' passion for the continuation of the family explains much that would otherwise be inexplicable in his treatment of his son.

He believed that he was descended from an Italian family called Arrighetti, which migrated into France at the end of the thirteenth century, and he used to boast that the only mésalliance in the family had been intermarriage with the Medici. Historical research, however, which explodes so many pleasant fictions, has shown that there is no sufficient reason for believing that the Mirabeaus were descended from the Arrighetti, and that the real founder of the family was a certain Jean Riquet or Riqueti, a merchant and manufacturer

of Marseilles in the days of Henri IV. This Jean Riquet married a lady of noble family, and managed by some means or other to get his claim to be regarded as noble admitted, for he was a rich man.

We learn from La Bruyère that this was not so hard a thing as we might have supposed. A man, indeed, could not receive letters of nobility unless his family had been free from the taint of trade for four generations, but there were ways and means by which this difficulty could be circumvented. By a process known as rehabilitation, a rich man was assumed to be already noble if he could produce a pedigree showing his descent from a noble family; and as there were heralds ready and willing, for a sufficient fee, to produce such a pedigree, the thing could easily be done. Further, as La Bruyère says, "the plebeian who habitually says that he derives his origin from some ancient baron or lord of a manor (from whom, in fact, he is not descended) has the pleasure of believing that he is so descended".

So it was that Victor Riquetti believed himself to be descended from the Arrighetti, though, in fact, he was not, for the grandson of Jean Riquet, merchant and manufacturer of Marseilles, obtained a false pedigree from the heralds in the days of Louis XIV, and his son in turn succeeded in obtaining a Marquisate. The ancient lineage of their family, in which Mirabeau no less than his father firmly believed, is then a fiction, and the authentic history of the family dates back no further than the end of the sixteenth century.

Among Mirabeau's writings is a life of his grandfather, whom he represents as a soldier of great distinction. It matters little whether

Mirabeau really wrote this or whether, as is more likely, his father wrote it, and he merely touched it up, for there is reason to suspect that whoever wrote it grossly exaggerated the exploits and importance of "Silver Neck", as he was called. Mirabeau's grandfather earned this nickname from the fact that having been severely wounded in the neck he had for the rest of his life to wear a silver collar.

One would like to believe that one anecdote recorded of him was true; it is said that he told Louis XIV to his face that had he spent his time at Court bribing some wench instead of in the field fighting the King's enemies he would have had speedier promotion and less wounds. But since this is not the sort of thing people said to Louis XIV and it is only recorded by the son of the man who is alleged to have said it, one is forced to suspect that the anecdote is apocryphal.

Anyway, the Marquis de Mirabeau had a firm belief in the greatness and importance of his family, which led him to regard his son not with the eye of a loving father, but with that of a supreme egoist whose chief desire it was to feel himself the ancestor of a famous family.

If Mirabeau was unfortunate in being the son of his father, he was equally unfortunate in being the son of his mother, for she was a silly, feckless, slobbering, untidy, over-demonstrative woman, devoid alike of charm and intelligence, utterly uncongenial to her husband both in tastes and habits, though for this perhaps she was less to blame than he was, for he seems to have married her from motives entirely mercenary.

The Marquis described the nineteen years of conjugal life he spent with his wife as one long

"renal colic". During that period ten or eleven children were born to them, of whom only five grew up, and the Marchioness' lack of natural modesty during her periods of pregnancy was a constant offence to her husband. A formal, rather prim man in his bearing and behaviour, he found the caresses she bestowed on him in public very trying, and equally so the scenes she made when he left her for the briefest period.

She liked to read, but could not tackle any book that was in the least serious. She was often sewing, but hardly ever finished anything she began, and left her needlework lying about soiled and untidy. She would sit down to meals in a dressing-jacket, with her petticoats on all anyhow—a thing highly offensive to her husband, who was very particular about dress; her bedroom was always in a hugger-mugger. She was unpunctual, and incompetent as a housekeeper and hostess. Then she was always at loggerheads with her mother-in-law, who lived with them, and whom her husband regarded with the greatest veneration.

In all respects, indeed, she must have been a difficult woman to live with, especially for a man of the Marquis' habits and character. In later life she became addicted both to drink and gambling, so that one is hardly surprised to find her brother-in-law, the Bailli, describing her as "a female who without possessing any of the attractions of her sex, has all its vices and those of our sex as well", nor to learn that the general opinion held about her was that she was one of the most ridiculous creatures in the world. A nice sort of woman for any man to have as a mother, and she does not appear to have made up for her other deficiencies by any deep maternal

affection for her children; indeed, as years went by, she seems to have valued them only as possible allies in the war she was waging against their father.

So it was into a very unhappy home that Mirabeau was born, a home in which bickering and quarrelling were incessant, and in which the father and mother constantly spoke to one another in a manner not calculated to encourage their offspring to feel much respect for either parent. Gabriel must have been a singularly unattractive babe, for he was born with a preternaturally enormous head, two teeth, and a twisted foot; strangely enough, since it was to his marvellous powers as an orator that he was to owe his fame, he was also born tongue-tied.

He was, however, strong and healthy, and the Marquis, writing to his brother when the boy was not yet a year old could say of him: "I have nothing to tell you about my monstrous son, except that he beats his nurse"—a feat which the Marquis evidently regarded as a proof of his son's health and vigour.

When he was three years old, Mirabeau had small-pox, and his mother, with her usual stupidity, resorted to a quack remedy: the result was that his face was badly pitted, which made him even uglier than he would otherwise have been. His ugliness and his unfortunate likeness to his maternal grandfather, which made him in appearance a complete Vassan, did not tend to endear him to his father, who at any rate during their boyhood showed a marked preference to his younger son, Boniface, who inherited the good looks of the Mirabeaus.

At a very early age Mirabeau shewed that he possessed both an excellent memory and an

active intelligence, as we learn from the description the Marquis gave of him when he was five years old to his brother, the Bailli: "Your nephew is big and strong . . . people talk of his knowledge throughout Paris . . . he has few vices save a thoughtless activity . . . but little sensibility; he is a sand on which nothing stands." Reading this, one wonders how much sensibility and stability of character the Marquis expected a child of five to exhibit.

Less than a year later he told his brother that Poisson, the boy's tutor, had told him to write down what came into his head, and that Gabriel immediately wrote as follows: "Sir, I beg you to pay attention to your writing, and not to make blots on your copy: to pay attention to what you are doing, to obey your father, your master, your mother, not to contradict. No subterfuges. Honour above everything. Attack nobody unless you are attacked; don't be mischievous with the servants, don't be familiar with them: hide the faults of others for that may happen to yourself." These maxims had no doubt been drummed into the little boy by his tutor, and indicate probably the faults which the tutor had most frequently to correct; but they shew no special precocity on the part of the pupil.

The same cannot be said of a remark he made at the time of his Confirmation when he was seven years old. Mirabeau says that it had been explained to him, presumably by the Cardinal who confirmed him, that "God could not make contradictories—for instance, a stick which has only one end"—and that he had asked whether a miracle was not a stick with only one end. His grandmother, the dour old widow of "Silver

Neck ", the one person the Marquis feared, never, Mirabeau says, forgave him for asking this question. If he did ask it, it was a very precocious question for a boy of seven, but since we have no authority for it but his own statement, made many years later, the authenticity of the anecdote is not above suspicion.

In the Marquis' letters there are frequent references to this son, but the tone in which he writes of him varies considerably. Sometimes he vaunts his cleverness, at others he speaks of him with asperity, almost with repugnance; never do we find language which suggests real affection.

Again, when he was twelve years old, the Marquis said of him: " He has plenty of talents and wit, but still more faults inherent in him " —though he does go on to question whether he is really guilty of the consummate vices attributed to him; while to another of his correspondents he says: " He has a cross-grained mind, is fantastic, impetuous, troublesome, with a tendency to evil before he knows it and is capable of it." A harsh judgment, one might say, for a father to pass on his own boy of twelve, yet one which it must be feared was only too well justified; for Gabriel, though abnormally clever, was not only deceitful and dishonest, but shewed an evil precocity in other directions, which is probably what the Marquis hints at when he speaks of " a tendency to evil before he knows it and is capable of it ".

The Marquis was an impatient, overbearing man, apt when things did not go as he liked to express himself in bitter and exaggerated language, which accounts for the somewhat unfeeling way in which he sometimes writes of his son. But

when Gabriel represents his father as a life-long enemy who had always hated him, he too is probably exaggerating. That the Marquis shewed him little affection, was harsh to him, and punished him with remorseless severity, is true enough, but that he regarded him from the cradle with implacable hatred is not borne out by the facts.

Gabriel was about thirteen when his father and mother, between whom there had been constant friction, decided to separate for good and all. Several years earlier the Marchioness had left her husband, but there had been no formal separation; and when in December, 1760, the Marquis, whose *Théorie de l'Impot* had given offence to the King, was banished to his estate at Bignon his wife returned to share his exile. Her husband found her as unpalatably fond and demonstrative as ever, and perhaps partly to protect himself from her unwelcome caresses invited Mme. de Pailly to stay with them, an arrangement to which the Marchioness appears to have made no objection at the time.

Mme. de Pailly was what might be described as a semi-grass widow, for her husband, who like herself was a Swiss, knew exactly when it was discreet to keep in the background, and eventually in the most convenient and friendly manner possible returned to his native land to live with his sisters. The Marquis had first met her at the house of his old friend, Mme. de Rochefort, and an intimacy soon sprang up between them. She was an attractive woman both in appearance and manners, and the nick-name of "the black cat" which she had gained was perhaps suggested as much by her gentle, quiet, ingratiating ways as by the fact that she always dressed in black.

The name was also an appropriate one, for she had sharp claws beneath her velvet paws. From the first she disliked Mirabeau, and while he was still a boy came to the conclusion that he would grow up a very disagreeable man. Whether she was as much his enemy as Mirabeau supposed is hard to say ; but certainly in his quarrels with his father she always very wholeheartedly took the father's side.

In the early part of 1762, the Marchioness left home to go and stay with her mother, and the Marquis, who had proof of her misconduct in his possession, subsequently arranged an amicable separation. The bitter quarrels and the protracted law-suits which followed, and in the end ruined both parties, turned not on the infidelities of either the husband or the wife, but on the disposition of the wife's fortune.

A legend, however, has grown up which represents the separation of Mirabeau's parents in another and more dramatic light. The Marquis, it is said, brought Mme. de Pailly to Bignon, and the Marchioness indignantly refused to share her home with her husband's mistress. The Marquis coldly informed her that if she did not care to remain she could go. Neither her daughter Caroline, who with her husband, the Count du Saillant, was present, nor her sister-in-law the widow of the Chevalier de Mirabeau, dared say a word ; only her elder and beloved son, Gabriel, took her part, and by so doing incurred the undying and implacable hatred of his father and Mme. de Pailly.

It is a magnificently dramatic picture—the cynically cruel husband and the demure, fawning mistress turning the outraged wife out of house and home ; and the brave little son, alone of all

the family, daring to take his deeply injured mother's part. Yes—it is dramatic, though utterly destitute of historical foundation; for, at the time the Marchioness left her husband, her daughter Caroline was not yet married, but still a pupil at the Convent at Montargis; while it was not till about eighteen months later that the Chevalier's widow came to make her home at Bignon. Mme. de Pailly also did not become a regular member of the Marquis' household till some little time after the Marchioness' departure.

When Gabriel was fourteen he had got beyond the control of his tutor, Poisson, for he feared no one but his father, and evidently led the unhappy tutor a pretty dance. "He knows many things I have not taught him and hardly any of those I have," complains Poisson in a letter to the Marquis. "He teaches himself, covers his copy-books with notes which he hides from me, but does not fear, when I state well established facts in his presence, to contradict me in a way which humiliates my knowledge, and to argue in a way which troubles my reason."

After receiving such a report from the tutor the Marquis was obviously obliged to make fresh arrangements for his son's education. He therefore persuaded Captain Sigrais, a friend and relation of the family, to take charge of Gabriel. At first the boy seems to have been happy with Sigrais and his wife, and to have produced a good impression on them, for they praised his wonderful memory and goodness of heart. But this state of things did not last long; Sigrais, too, began to find his pupil unmanageable, and wrote to his father complaining that owing to the boy's precocious amorousness he had had to

discharge two of his maid-servants; Gabriel, moreover, was, he said, shewing himself intractable and unwilling to be taught.

It was when he sent him to Sigrais that the Marquis first imposed on his son the name of Pierre Bouffière: now, as this was the name of a property near Limoges which belonged to the Vassan family, there was nothing necessarily derogatory to Mirabeau in having to bear it; yet he always felt that his father, in forbidding him to bear his own name and ordering him to assume that of Pierre Bouffière, intended to insult and humiliate him. Perhaps, since at a later date the Marquis was reluctant to allow Gabriel to resume his own name, and only did so under pressure, his motive for calling him Pierre Bouffière may have been what Mirabeau supposed.

At any rate it was still in the name of Pierre Bouffière that Mirabeau was entered at the Abbé Choquard's School at Paris. "This man," wrote the Marquis, "is unyielding, and inflicts punishments when there is need; I have told him not to spare them, and my reasons"—words which, when every allowance has been made for the father's asperity, suggest that the son was rather an incorrigible young scamp.

The Marquis had not provided his son with any pocket money—whether through an oversight or intentionally, we do not know; but Mirabeau, who naturally enough put it down to spite, wrote to his mother asking for some, which she immediately sent him. Unfortunately, this came to his father's ears, and the Marquis, to prevent his son receiving further supplies from the same source, ordered that the boy was not to be allowed any correspondence.

To be sent to school under an assumed name, to be given no pocket money, and to be forbidden to receive any letters, is certainly hard treatment for a boy of fourteen, however ill-behaved he has been, and it is not surprising that it rankled in Mirabeau's mind.

After having him in his charge for about a year, Choquard believed that he had succeeded in "taming and more than half-reclaiming" Gabriel: but a few months later, finding him the most immoral and insubordinate pupil he had ever had to deal with, suggested to his father that the boy needed sterner treatment and had better be removed to a reformatory. The Marquis, influenced no doubt by Choquard's complaints, had thoughts of sending the boy out of the country. But before he had time to carry out his decision he was visited by a deputation of Choquard's pupils, bringing a round robin signed by the whole school begging him to allow his son to remain at the school.

Gabriel, when he had learned what his father was contemplating, had set to work to enlist the sympathy of his fellow pupils; he told them that no one had ever loved him, that he had always been harshly treated and made to suffer for his ugliness, with the result that all declared that if Gabriel was sent away they would go too. Choquard himself was touched both by the boy's eloquence and by the tale of his sufferings, and came to the conclusion that kindness and sympathy might succeed where harsh measures had failed. It was therefore with his consent that the deputation of his scholars waited upon Mirabeau's father, and the Marquis went so far as to grant his son a three months' respite. Since Mirabeau remained with Choquard for about another eight-

teen months, it is obvious that he must have mended his ways.

An interesting proof of the progress he made under Choquard is afforded by an entry in Bachaumont's *Memoires Secrets*, dated January, 1767, which records that on St. Louis' Day a eulogy on the Prince of Condé comparing him with Scipio Africanus, composed by the young Mirabeau, had been recited by him at Choquard's Academy. "One sees," the writer continues, "that this eaglet already flies in the track of his illustrious father, and for this reason the anecdote becomes valuable. The son has more perspicuity, more elegance in his style, and his discourse is very well written."

Altogether he seems to have made excellent use of the last year and a half he spent with Choquard; his versatility and the ease with which he learned were amazing. At a later time he claimed that during this period he gained a good knowledge not only of the classics but of English, French, German, Italian and Spanish, besides mathematics, music and drawing. Here he was undoubtedly exaggerating, for of some of these subjects he only acquired a knowledge during his imprisonment at Vincennes; still he probably received a good education at Choquard's, and possessed unusual attainments for a youth of his age. His amusements were almost as varied as his studies, for they included riding, swimming, dancing, fencing and tennis.

Among his schoolfellows were two English brothers, Hugh and Gilbert Elliott, with whom Mirabeau became great friends; and a letter written by Gilbert to Hugh, when Mirabeau visited him in England nearly twenty years

later, gives us an interesting glimpse of what Mirabeau was like as a boy—

> "Our old persecuted schoolfellow, Mirabeau . . . is as overbearing in his conversation, as awkward in his graces, as ugly and misshapen in face and person, as dirty in his dress, and withal as perfectly *suffisant* as we remember him twenty years ago at school: I loved him, however, then, and so did you, though, as he confesses, you sometimes quarrelled with him, being somewhat less patient in admitting supreme pretensions than me. His courage, fortitude, spirits, talents, application, and above all his wrongs and sufferings, should rather increase than weaken our affection for him."

CHAPTER II

EARLY TROUBLES

As Gabriel's schooldays drew to a close and his father had to make plans for his future, he reverted to the idea of sending him abroad; for some reason, however, he changed his mind and decided that the army was the proper place for him. The regiment he selected was the Berri Cavalry, whereof the Marquis de Lambert, a rigorous young martinet, was Colonel. Not content that Gabriel should be under strict discipline he sent with him a servant named Grevin, who was to act both as the son's domestic and the father's spy.

Mirabeau, who was now eighteen years old, joined his troop at Saintes on the 19th of July, 1767, as a volunteer; for a year or more he behaved so well, and attended so assiduously to his duties, that even his father was pleased and determined to obtain a sub-lieutenant's commission for him.

But it was too good to last. The unhappy Gabriel could not long keep out of trouble. He lost forty louis gambling, perhaps, as he alleged, being egged on to play by others, for gambling was not one of his many failings. He got into debt, as he continued to do as long as he lived, and fell in love with the daughter of a police officer. According to him, Lambert was also

paying court to the same young lady, and was so infuriated at finding himself cut out by Mirabeau that he not only used his authority to inflict on his subordinate outrageous punishments, but either caused or winked at the circulation of a scurrilous caricature of Mirabeau, which made him the laughing stock of the regiment.

It is not unreasonable to be a little sceptical about the truth of this story, for Mirabeau, when anxious to palliate his own conduct or blacken the character of another, was apt to say things characterized rather by fertility of invention than scrupulous regard for truth.

Since he avowed his intention of marrying the young lady, it is possible that the severe discipline to which Lambert subjected him may have been dictated not by jealousy but by indignation at the thought that an officer of his regiment contemplated making a mésalliance. That Mirabeau's affection for his sweetheart was something more than a mere passing whim, is proved by the fact that he continued to correspond with her secretly for a considerable time, their letters being sent under cover to his youngest sister, Louise, who acted as their intermediary.

Anyway, whether the story of Lambert's jealousy be true or false, Mirabeau found his life unendurable, and deserted. Having fled to Paris, he sought the protection of the Duke de Nivernois, an intimate friend of his father, to whom he complained bitterly of the cruel treatment he had received at Lambert's hands.

The Marquis was furious at his son's new escapade, but his son-in-law, the Comte du

Saillant, offered to go to Paris and take charge of the runaway. This was not the only time that du Saillant stretched out a helping hand to Mirabeau when he was in trouble ; but Mirabeau does not seem ever to have felt much gratitude to his brother-in-law for his good offices, for he frequently spoke of him with bitterness and contempt.

Du Saillant found Mirabeau at Paris surrounded by a mob of brigands, as his father graphically puts it, and promptly took him back to Saintes, where, in the presence of the Colonel, the Lieutenant-Colonel and Grevin, he vainly tried to exculpate himself. It was obviously impossible for Gabriel to remain in Lambert's regiment after what had happened, and his father's first intention was to pack him off to the Dutch East Indies.

For this we do not have to rely on Mirabeau's statement alone, for what he says is borne out by a passage in one of his uncle the Bailli's letters : "See," he writes, "if the excesses of this wretch deserve that he should for ever be excluded from society ; and in that case to send him to the Dutch Colonies is, as you say, the best of all ; we can be sure never to see appear above the horizon a scoundrel born to be the affliction of his relations and the shame of his race."

When we remember that Mirabeau was at the time a youth of nineteen, and that his uncle, a kindly humane man, had no personal knowledge of him, who can doubt that it was the Marquis himself who had given his brother so ill an opinion of his nephew ?

To the Marquis' shame it must be said that his plan of sending Mirabeau to the East Indies

was probably prompted by the hope that the climate would bring his son to an early grave; it may therefore also be regarded as something to his credit that he did not carry out his intention. But the knowledge that his father had even contemplated such a step rankled in Mirabeau's mind; "it made," he said, "a profound impression upon me and has tremendously influenced the rest of my life". He believed not only that his father regarded him with implacable hatred, but was willing indirectly to compass his death.

If, however, the Marquis abandoned the idea of expatriating his son, he had no intention of letting his delinquencies go unpunished; he therefore decided to send him to prison and applied to the Duke de Choiseul for a *lettre de cachet*. A *lettre de cachet*, as we have seen, was an order from the King to imprison a certain person without trial, so that the unhappy prisoner often did not even know the reason for his incarceration. Five times did his father employ this terrible weapon against Mirabeau, and the injustice to which he was subjected and the sufferings he endured, owing to this egregious abuse of the royal authority, probably did as much as anything to make Mirabeau espouse the popular side at the revolution.

That any father should use such a means of chastising his son is strange enough, but it is stranger still when the father was the avowed opponent of the very means he employed. This is evident from a passage in his own writings in which the Marquis says that in 1756, at the instigation of his registrar, he had applied for *lettres de cachet* against certain of his vassals in Provence, but that he repents of having done

this and will never do so again. "I will do so no more," he continues, "and recommend those who come after me, if they have the patience to read this, never to do so, however plausible may be their particular reasons in special cases; for it is a great abuse on account of the consequences."

That the manner in which he treated his son was utterly at variance with the principles he professed is also clear from a number of passages which Mirabeau himself culled from his father's published works. Here are a few of them—

> "Justice is nothing else than the conservation of the respective rights of each individual."
>
> "Restraint is the most inadequate of all the forces of authority."
>
> "Everywhere without exception methods of coercion are the best suited of all for producing on a man a result opposite to what they are intended to."
>
> "Penalties out of proportion to the crimes are an abuse contrary to morals and dishonour the laws."
>
> "Our person is our own, and every attack upon this exclusive right is a sacrilege."

These quotations are sufficient to prove that the Marquis must have regarded the employment of *lettres de cachet* as a grave abuse of justice: yet again and again did he have recourse to this odious expedient to restrain, not only his elder son, but his wife and his youngest daughter. It was not then without reason that Mirabeau said the "friend of men" was the enemy of his own family.

How can we account for so glaring an inconsistency? The explanation is to be found in his theory of paternal authority. This he regarded

as a natural right, which the state did not give, though it might take it away. "All these rights of the father over the son," he says, "are so many unalterable portions of absolute property." True, he admits that "in society no one can be the sovereign of a citizen save the State", but no doubt he argued to himself that if the State was willing, by means of a *lettre de cachet*, to give a father power to imprison his son, where and for as long as he pleased, the father was only exercising his natural right and the son had no cause of complaint! The Marquis, then, like many another, was probably blind to the inconsistency of his own conduct.

Another line of defence which he adopted to extenuate his action was that he imprisoned his son not so much to punish him as to protect him from the consequences of his own folly; for when a man was imprisoned by virtue of a *lettre de cachet* he was, to use the technical phrase, "under the King's hand", and his creditors could not take proceedings against him for debt. Still it is difficult to believe that this can have been his real motive the first time he imprisoned his son; it seems more probable that he was prompted by a desire to gratify the animosity of Lambert and to give a vent to his own spleen.

If it be true that Montigny and others have not been altogether just to the Marquis in representing him as the consistent and implacable enemy of his son, it is also true that he often treated him with a harshness that almost amounted to deliberate cruelty. Of course, Mirabeau's conduct at Saintes was blameworthy; a young fellow of eighteen ought not to lose forty louis at cards or dice, he ought not to run into debt,

he ought not to indulge in a love affair with the daughter of a police officer, still less if he is the son of a Marquis ought he to dream of disgracing a noble family by marrying her; however harshly and unjustly his colonel treats him he ought not to desert, but many a young officer has done worse things than Mirabeau did, and not been imprisoned by his own father.

In after years Mirabeau did many utterly indefensible things, usually because he was a desperate man trying by desperate means to extricate himself from overwhelming difficulties; but if nothing can excuse some of the things he did, his father must share some of the responsibility for his misdeeds, since it was partly his harshness which drove Gabriel to desperation.

For a time Mirabeau seems to have tried to resist his father's intention of sending him to prison; perhaps he even threatened to cause a public scandal about it, which he might easily have done, for, as his Colonel himself testified, he was extraordinarily popular both in Saintes and the surrounding country. In the end, however, he submitted to being sent to prison with a good grace and promised when released to rejoin his regiment; he even asked that Grevin might remain with him: Grevin, who spied on all he did and reported it to the Marquis: Grevin, who not long before had described him as a "frightful monster capable of anything".

So Mirabeau was packed off to the Isle de Rhé to undergo his first imprisonment. The governor of the fortress was the Bailli d'Aulan, to whom the Marquis commended his son as "passionate, contumacious and a liar by instinct".

Once his son was safely under lock and key, the Marquis felt easier in his mind; if a term of imprisonment reformed "a knave with all the artifice of the devil and wit like a demon", well and good—if not, there was always the East Indies to fall back on. He was not, however, to be left in peace for long, since Mirabeau soon managed to ingratiate himself with his gaoler. It was the same wherever he went—strangers were always fascinated by him, and the Bailli d'Aulan proved no exception; he not only allowed Mirabeau to walk about the citadel instead of keeping him in close confinement as his father had intended, but even interceded on his behalf and tried to obtain his release.

What was it, one wonders, that enabled Mirabeau to exercise so marvellous an influence over nearly everyone with whom he came in contact, young and old, rich and poor, male and female alike? It certainly was not his personal appearance, for he was almost hideously ugly in face, bulky and ungainly in body, even when quite a young man. It was partly no doubt his beguiling voice, a voice like a silver bell—partly his uncanny cleverness in extenuating and explaining away his misdeeds and representing himself as the unhappy victim of malice and misfortune.

For instance, in one of his letters to Lenoir, after speaking of the "innocence and generosity" of his conduct, he says that he has been "a friend even to enthusiasm, devoted even to rashness, constantly compromised for others, constantly abandoned for those for whom I have been compromised, charged with the faults of others, disdaining to excuse my own."

But perhaps the chief reason why Mirabeau was so successful in winning sympathy wherever he went was that he was a born actor, and could play the part of an injured innocent so convincingly that even those who had the most irrefragable proof of his guilt could hardly help being over-persuaded by him; for when he was lying most unblushingly he did it with an apparent sincerity which must almost have deceived himself. Not without reason did his father call him a comedian, which we must remember means in French a hypocrite as well as an actor; not without reason did the actor, Molé, after hearing him speak in the National Assembly, say: "My God, how you have missed your vocation!" A remark which, it is said, Mirabeau took as a compliment.

His first imprisonment lasted only about six months, for in the spring of 1769 he was released in order that he might take part in an expedition which was being sent to Corsica. That island had formerly been under the rule of the little republic of Genoa, but was ceded to the French in 1768; and the Corsicans, not relishing their change of masters, had rebelled. The fighting was not likely to be of a very serious kind, but it was the only active service Mirabeau was destined ever to see.

Shortly after his release from prison he fell in at La Rochelle with a broken-down officer who, annoyed that Mirabeau rejected the friendly advances he made, picked a quarrel with him. In the duel which followed, Mirabeau wounded his adversary. It was probably to this incident that he referred when, ten years later, he said that he reproached himself for having fought a

duel with a man, knowing all the while that he himself was in the wrong.

Grevin in due course reported the matter to the Marquis, adding that Mirabeau went about "cursing, beating, wounding and vomiting forth wickedness the like of which was never heard before"—at least, so the Marquis wrote in a letter to his brother. Grevin, however, is not a very reliable witness, and it is likely enough that the Marquis may have embellished Grevin's report somewhat, for he is never sparing in the use of strong language when he is expressing resentment against his son.

On the 16th of April, Mirabeau, who now had a sub-lieutenant's commission, set sail for Corsica under the command of the Baron de Viomenil, Colonel of the Legion of Lorraine, whom the Marquis regarded as the sort of man to lick his son into shape. He seems, however, to have been a very different type of officer from Lambert, for Mirabeau himself said that while a Lambert could ruin him, a Viomenil could make him do exactly as he pleased.

The war, which was of the nature of a punitive expedition, offered Mirabeau little chance of distinguishing himself as a soldier, but he performed his duties with a zeal and efficiency which won for him the approval and esteem of his superior officers. There were love affairs, of course, and Mirabeau himself wrote a detailed account of them, which Montigny destroyed out of respect for the author, although he admits it was a witty and original work.

But love and war were not his only interests in Corsica, for he found the opportunity, at least so he professed, to compile a history of the island. The merits of the work greatly impressed both

his father and uncle, who regarded it as a very remarkable performance for a youth of twenty. So, no doubt, had he really compiled it himself it would have been. In fact, Mirabeau's part in it amounted to little more than transcribing the work of another; he may have altered the wording here and there, and recast a sentence or a paragraph, but generally speaking the book was cribbed wholesale from the work of another, a learned Corsican priest.

Mirabeau was a man of wide reading and tenacious memory; he could write and write well in a rather florid rhetorical style, but he was as unscrupulous in literary as in monetary matters, and all his life, when it suited his purpose, had no hesitation in palming off the work of others as his own.

The object of this particular fraud, for we can hardly call it by a gentler name, was perhaps to propitiate his father; if so, it was successful, for the Marquis was duly impressed by it, and regarded it as showing both audacity and character. Still, he was not as yet wholly reconciled to his son, and would not allow him to lay aside the name of Pierre Bouffière, by which he had now been known for about seven years, and resume his own.

On his return from Corsica in May, 1770, he did, however, give him permission to visit his uncle Bailli at the Château de Mirabeau. The Bailli was at the time staying at Aix, so Mirabeau, when he visited the home of his ancestors, found no one to greet him. He accordingly followed his uncle to Aix and made himself known to him, for it was many years since they had last met.

This uncle had, when quite young, entered the order of Malta; had spent all his early life

at sea and seen a good deal of active service. He had been governor of Guadeloupe, and had fulfilled the duties of this office with equity and firmness. At one time he hoped to obtain a place in the Ministry of the Marine, through the influence of Mme. de Pompadour, but he was not apparently courtier enough to win the approval of the reigning favourite, for she is reported to have said to him: "What a pity it is that all the Mirabeaus are so headstrong!"

Not long after he had failed in his attempt to enter the Ministry of the Marine, he obtained the Commandery of St. Eulalie, a post to which a very considerable income was attached. He was a kind, generous, open-hearted man, with plenty of shrewd sense, whose chief failing seems to have been an exaggerated respect for his elder brother's ability, and an excessive deference to his opinion.

He had at this time little personal knowledge of his nephew, and certainly cannot have been predisposed in his favour by the accounts the Marquis had sent him of his son's character and conduct. However, as usual, Mirabeau came, was seen and conquered, as is evident from a letter which the Bailli wrote to his brother on the 15th of May, 1770—

> "Yesterday evening I was completely surprised. A soldier brought me a note from M. Pierre Bouffière to ask when I could see him. I replied that he might come. I was enchanted to see him. My heart expanded at the sight of him. I found him ugly, but not a bad expression, for behind his pock marks, and his features which have changed a good deal, he has something refined, gracious, noble. If he is not worse than Nero he will be better than Marcus Aurelius, for I don't think I have ever come across to much intellect—my poor head was quite confounded.

"He seems to fear you as if you were a provost marshal, but he swore to me that there was nothing he would not do to please you. He admitted to me that he had done many foolish things, but said he had been in despair. He told the Abbé (*i.e.* Castagny the Chaplain of the Château de Mirabeau) that he had been badly managed in his childhood, and that Viomenil, his last Colonel, had managed him gently and reasonably."

About a week later the Bailli wrote to his brother again :—

"I assure you then, that I have found him very penitent for his past faults ; he seems to me to have a heart easily impressed. As to his intellect, I have already spoken to you of it—the devil has not as much ; I repeat to you. He is either the biggest humbug in the world, or the person in Europe best suited to become a general on land or sea, or a minister, or chancellor, or Pope, whichever he wishes."

The Bailli read his nephew's character pretty accurately, for Mirabeau was a strangé mixture of the great and base : a man capable of achieving feats which only genius can achieve, but also capable of becoming a great scoundrel. His subsequent career justified his uncle's opinion of him, for he became one of the biggest humbugs in the world, and one of the most notable public men in Europe.

Unfortunately his father, though ready enough to admit Gabriel's cleverness, always tended to take a pessimistic view of his character, and believed that the young man had been taking his uncle in. "The good Bailli," he wrote, "has kept him with him for several days, and the romanticism with which this scoundrel is perfumed from head to foot has mounted to his uncle's head, good and strong though it be. He

has been ' quite confounded '—these are his very words ; he has been enchanted with him. . . . He has won over his uncle. So be it ! He won't win over his father so cheaply."

The Marquis is perhaps not wholly to be blamed for refusing to believe too readily in his son's repentance, for Gabriel was ever ready to profess penitence, and promise amendment when it served his turn ; yet, had the father been less autocratic, above all, had he found for his son a congenial career which would have provided an outlet for his great talents and superabundant energy, much evil might have been avoided.

Gabriel was anxious to remain in the army, and for a long time believed that his real bent was for military affairs ; he told Mme. de Monnier that he had read every book that had been written on the art of war and made extracts from three hundred authors, while some of his superior officers who had observed his conduct during the campaign in Corsica believed that he had the makings of a first-rate soldier. His father did indeed, some months later, obtain for him a commission as Captain of Dragoons in the Legion of Lorraine, but since this was more akin to a commission in an English militia regiment than in the regular army, it led to nothing, and Mirabeau's career as a soldier practically ended on his return from Corsica.

The Marquis' plan for his son was that he should follow in his own footsteps, interest himself in economic problems and undertake the care of his estates. He accordingly sent him some volumes of *Ephemerides*, a periodical devoted to economic subjects, with injunctions to study them. The subject was not particularly congenial to Mirabeau, but being above everything anxious

to placate his father, he set to work to do as he was bid, and his extraordinary capacity for assimilating knowledge of every description soon enabled him to master the subject.

The Bailli protested against the line his brother was taking, but in vain. "Assuredly," he wrote, "it is not you who need be told that it would be as ridiculous for a father to wish the ideas of his children to conform with his own as to wish that they could wear his shoes; and provided the heart be right we must not quarrel with the tastes. . . . I think that without losing the gravity and authority of a father, you must show kindness and interest to this young man."

The Marquis, however, was a man who usually went his own way, so for several months during the summer of 1770 Mirabeau remained at the Château de Mirabeau, studying economics, ingratiating himself with the servants and tenants, and running up debts, for wherever he went he always ran up debts and persuaded even the most unlikely people to lend him money. While in prison he had incurred debts to the tune of 10,000 livres, and during the Corsican expedition had borrowed money of sergeants, soldiers—anybody in fact who could be persuaded to lend it to him.

Still, though the Marquis maintained a firm front, he had his own reasons for wishing to be reconciled with his son. His mother-in-law was nearing her end, and when Mme. de Vassan died he was anxious to have his children on his side in the dispute he felt sure would arise between himself and his wife over the disposition of her mother's property. He therefore planned to hold a family gathering at the Chateau de Mirabeau

in August; but for some reason the project was not carried out, and his youngest daughter, Louise, with her husband, the Marquis de Cabris, were the only members of the family who came to the Château at the appointed time.

Louise, who had been educated at a convent, had not seen her brother for seven years, but for some time they had been corresponding with one another, and it was by her help that he had kept in touch with his sweetheart, the police officer's daughter at Saintes. The impression she produced upon Mirabeau when he met her at the Château de Mirabeau may be gathered from the description he gave of her many years later, a description written, we must remember, after he had quarrelled with her—

> "La C., whose understanding has an extent and sagacity by no means common even among men most distinguished by their talents, and who had withal the splendour of the most brilliant youth, the most eloquent black eyes, the freshness of Hebe, the air of nobility which one finds most in ancient statues, and a figure such as I have never seen one to equal it in beauty; who had, I say, with all this, that grace, that seductive magic, which belongs only to your sex.
>
> "However depraved I have since found her soul and her reason, I persist in believing that at 17 or 18 this perversity was still deeply buried, and I doubt not that a man of honour and good sense would have restrained her head and corrected her heart; for her imagination is the sole theatre of her opinions and sentiments; but her impetuosity, her fickleness, her inventiveness, wasted her resources. This astonishing woman was capable of generosity through self-love, of sensibility through illusion, of constancy, of fidelity even, through obstinacy."

The brother and sister, meeting practically as strangers, were greatly attracted by one

another, and soon became fast friends and allies, but there is every reason to believe that Mirabeau's statement that a guilty passion subsisted between them was a baseless and shameless lie. Louise was not a good woman, and could not be described as a model of wifely fidelity or female decorum, but she was not as black as Mirabeau painted her.

Married at the age of seventeen to the half-crazy Count de Cabris, whom she had never even seen till the day before her wedding, she soon kicked over the traces. In the Chevalier de Briançon she soon found a lover to her taste, and roamed about the country with him, sometimes disguised in man's attire. Such conduct naturally caused scandal, but Louise did not care. Her father might rage at her and call her the Serpent Rongelime; but since she was a married woman, and no longer under his control, she laughed at his anger and despised his threats.

Such a woman, reckless, daring, uncontrolled and uncontrollable, was in many ways not a good companion for Mirabeau, who was himself hot-headed, impulsive, and improvident: still, she was both kind and generous to him, and did her best to prevent him making the most tragic blunder of his life. With all her faults, she did not deserve that he should slander her as he did.

It was not till more than three months after his return from Corsica that Mirabeau was permitted to visit his father. On the 25th of August he left the Château de Mirabeau, bearing with him a letter from his uncle in which the good Bailli pleaded with the Marquis to deal gently with his son. He was delayed on his journey

by two accidents. Once he was kicked by a horse; at another time he was thrown, and it was at this time that he first had an attack of the kidney trouble which was to cause him so much suffering in later years.

The Marquis, according to his own statement, received the prodigal with kindness, even tenderness, and at the intercession of the other members of the family allowed him to lay aside the hated name of Pierre Bouffière and resume his own. Still the Marquis, if somewhat mollified, was not without anxiety, and warned Gabriel that unless he behaved himself he would be sent abroad; for he recognized that the intellectual and ardent exuberance of his son—"the whirlwind", as he called him—would be sure to lead him into trouble unless his nose were kept on the grindstone.

The first use the Marquis made of his son was to employ him as an intermediary between himself and his wife. The bone of contention between them was the property which the Marchioness inherited at the death of her mother, Mme. de Vassan. Now, fiercely though the friend of men hated the Vassans, his hatred did not extend to their money, and he was anxious to get complete control of his wife's fortune. In return he proposed to make her an annual allowance, the amount of which he considered sufficient, but she, miserably inadequate.

Mirabeau could not refuse to undertake the negotiation, for it was of the utmost importance to him to keep in his father's good books; but, on the other hand, as he hoped his mother would make a will in his favour, he did not wish to offend her. His task was therefore a very difficult and delicate one, nor did he meet with any success.

The Marchioness would listen to no arguments, flew into a violent rage and, Mirabeau affirmed, discharged a pistol at him ; but it must be admitted that the last detail looks rather like a poetical embellishment of the story.

The Marquis does not seem to have held his son responsible for the failure of his mission, for soon after he sent him to set up " a tribunal of reconciliation " in the Barony of Pierre Bouffière. This was a sort of arbitration court, consisting of eight members, elected by the eight parishes of which the Barony consisted. The object of this institution was to prevent unnecessary litigation ; and to strengthen its position, the Marquis undertook to pay the costs of the party which accepted the decision of the tribunal, if the other party rejected it and appealed to the ordinary courts.

So well did Mirabeau carry out this work that his father said he now deserved to be treated with confidence. And though he had vowed no son of his should visit Paris till he was twenty-five he actually summoned Gabriel to the capital in February, 1771, and allowed him to remain there for about four months. It was a great time for Mirabeau. He went to Versailles three times a week ; he was received with open arms by all the great people at Court who, though they found him a regular madcap, were greatly impressed by his wit and capacity ; his personal charm won him friends wherever he went and his easy familiarity did not offend.

But Mirabeau did not spend all his time at Paris in social amusements, much of it he passed in the libraries reading and studying.

Although the Marquis was on the whole pleased with his son's conduct at this time, he

found him rather a fatiguing companion, and was not anxious to keep him at his side longer than necessary; so having failed to persuade the Count de Muy, the Director General, to take Gabriel with him on a tour of inspection he was about to make in Flanders and Alsace, or M. de Marboeuf, the military commandant of Corsica, to attach him to his staff, he packed him off back to Limousin to continue the practical study of rural economy.

There he remained till near the end of the year, when, after a flying visit to his father at Bignon, he went to the Château de Mirabeau to settle troubles which had arisen on the estate, for the Marquis was constantly at loggerheads with the representatives of the communities of Mirabeau and Beaumont of which he was Seigneur.

Mirabeau took a strong line from the start; the people allowed their cattle to stray in the Marquis' woods, so he threatened to seize any cattle he found in the woods and imprison those in charge of them. He took legal proceedings against those who were stealing wood, and even seized several mules loaded with stolen wood.

He wanted to assemble the people, so as to hear their complaints and render justice, but only five came in answer to his summons, for most of them were under the influence of his father's chief adversary, Mottet. So the quarrel dragged on, and though Mirabeau congratulated himself on having acted with moderation and having obtained all the success he could desire, he seems on the whole to have had the worst of it, and to have gained for himself the reputation of being high handed and overbearing.

Little did the men of the district imagine that

the arrogant aristocrat of 1772 who, when a man dared to remain covered in his presence, knocked his hat off with his walking stick, would become the great Tribune of the people seventeen years later.

CHAPTER III

MIRABEAU AND HIS WIFE

If Mirabeau was unfortunate in being the son of his parents, he was equally unfortunate in being the husband of his wife : with this difference, that while the one was a misfortune he could not avoid, the other he brought on himself.

The suggestion that Mirabeau should marry Mlle. de Marignane was originally made by his cousin the Marchioness de Limaye-Coriolis, though at the time nothing came of it. Maybe Mirabeau found his life at the family Château lonesome and tedious, and thought a wife would help to enliven it. Maybe he expected that if he were married he would be more independent of his father ; certainly he was in debt and always short of money, so probably we shall not be far wrong if we assume that it was the large fortune to which Marie-Emilie de Marignane was heiress which attracted him, rather than the general amenities of married life, or the beauty and personal charms of his prospective bride.

If we may believe the Bailli, and there is no reason why we should not, Emilie was no great beauty. This is how he describes her : " very ordinary appearance and even common at first sight ; a brunette, even a little swarthy, with fine eyes, fine hair, fine teeth, and a pretty, incessant laugh ; small but well made, though

holding herself badly ; lively, gay and pleasant." Emilie's portrait bears out the Bailli's description of her personal appearance, and her subsequent history proves that he had estimated her character pretty shrewdly.

Anyway, early in 1772 Mirabeau went to Aix to court her. She was already eighteen—quite a marriageable age—older indeed than many brides of the period, and since her home life was not very happy, for her parents lived apart and her father, an indolent, pleasure-loving man, paid little heed to her, she was ready and willing enough to marry. Rumour said that her fortune would amount to over half a million livres, so naturally there were other suitors in the field.

Her father had originally intended to marry her to his friend the Count de Valbelle, who spent his time in his Château at Tourves in a perpetual round of gaieties, so that the society which he kept there had come to be known as the " Court of Love ". But Madame des Rolands, the Queen of this Court of Love, proved an obstacle ; true, she was a married woman, but since her husband was a man of eighty she could look forward hopefully to his decease in the near future, and as soon as her husband was dead she intended to marry Valbelle herself.

But Mirabeau's difficulties did not end with the withdrawal of the Count de Valbelle from the field ; and when the Marquis de Cabris suggested Mirabeau to the Marquis de Marignane as a suitor for his daughter he replied that he had other views for her. The suitor he favoured was M. de la Vallette. But while La Vallette had been ingratiating himself with the father Mirabeau had curried favour with the prospective

bride herself and her grandmother, who lived with the Marquis and kept house for him. Emilie, who was fond of music, played and sang well, so Mirabeau frequently sought her company that they might sing together, for he had a charming voice and knew how to use it. This gave him the opportunity to win over both Emilie and her grandmother to his side.

Her preference for Mirabeau led Emilie into a wrangle with her father, for when he told her that he intended her to marry La Vallette, she flatly refused to accept him as a husband; whereupon the Marquis lost his temper and said that if she would not have La Vallette at any rate she should not have Mirabeau. But the dismissal of La Vallette only served to bring other and more redoubtable rivals into the field, to wit the Marquis de Grammont, the Viscount de Chabrillon, the Marquis de Chaumont and M. d'Albertas.

Even in a town no bigger than a snuff-box, as the "Friend of Men" contemptuously described Aix, a young man who goes courting a great heiress must be prepared to cut a certain figure, and to cut a figure you must spend money, whether you have got it or not. It was probably for this reason that soon after his arrival at Aix Mirabeau received orders from his father to leave the place at once, but though he disobeyed these orders they no doubt made him feel that it was advisable to bring his courtship to a successful issue as soon as possible; the rivalry of other suitors would have the same effect—therefore, as he himself said, he had to resort to unique means to achieve his end.

These means were as dishonourable as they were original. One night he ordered his coach-

man to keep his carriage waiting in a street near the Marquis de Marignane's house; he himself gained admission to the house through the connivance of one of the maid-servants, and took good care to be seen leaving the house early next morning. The ruse was completely successful, and the Marquis de Marignane, seeing that his daughter's good name was hopelessly compromised, made the best of a bad job and consented to her marriage with Mirabeau.

Always prodigal of promises, Mirabeau had assured his future father-in-law that his father would settle the family property on him and make him an allowance of 12,000 livres, while his uncle would come and share his home with him. He had, however, promised more than he could perform, for his uncle did not come to live with him, and his father, though he did settle the property on him, was not prepared to make him as large an allowance as he had hoped; instead of 12,000 livres he would give only 6,000, to be increased by an additional 500 livres each year until a maximum of 8,500 was reached: in addition to this, he made his daughter-in-law presents of diamonds and other jewellery valued at about 12,000 livres.

The bride had great expectations, and her father settled 240,000 livres on her, but since this would not become her property until his death she had no immediate income except the 3,000 livres a year he promised to allow her. At a later time Mirabeau asserted that, when he found his father would not provide him with what he considered an adequate income to maintain his wife suitably, he wished to break off the match, but that Emilie would not hear

of it. This may be true, but more likely it is a pure invention.

Mirabeau and Emilie were married on the 22nd of June, 1772. Of the bridegroom's relatives only his sister Louise and her husband attended the wedding: a temporary estrangement was caused between the brother and sister because Louise took Gabriel to task for scolding his wife.

The heavy expenses of the wedding plunged Mirabeau deeper in debt. "It is the custom in Provence," he wrote, "to give presents to everyone who comes to the wedding. It was sumptuous; the house was not empty for eight days. Mme. de Mirabeau had acquaintances without number, who had given her fine presents at their marriages: it was not suitable she should give them worse ones. Mme. de Mirabeau had only one dress at the time of her marriage, a taffeta one. It seemed to me she ought to have others."

That the bride should possess only one dress seems odd, but nevertheless it seems to be a fact that although her father had provided her with an ample trousseau of lingerie, laces, etc., her wedding dress was the only one she possessed.

To meet these expenses Mirabeau not only mortgaged the whole of his first year's income but borrowed of the Jews at exorbitant interest. Custom required that the newly wedded pair should visit the properties of their respective families, and make presents to the tenants and dependants on them; all this caused more expense.

It had been arranged that they should live at Aix with Emilie's grandmother, paying her 2,400 livres a year for their own and their servants' board and lodging. This seems a reasonable

figure, but Mirabeau, who probably had other reasons for desiring a separate establishment, said he found the expense too great, and in the autumn removed with his wife to the Château de Mirabeau, which his father allowed them as a residence.

This move, far from helping him to economize, only led to greater expense. The interior of the Château was gloomy and dilapidated, so Mirabeau had some of the rooms redecorated in extravagant style, the cost of the work amounting to three times what he had expected. On his wife too he spent money lavishly, making her presents of jewellery and expensive clothes, which in the course of a year cost him over 22,000 livres.

As if this were not enough, he kept open house and threw money about in a perfectly reckless manner. When his creditors began to press him he appealed to his father for help, but the Marquis would offer no more than 18,000 livres, which would have been a mere drop in the bucket.

The Marquis de Marignane was willing to give more substantial help. Emilie's grandmother had settled 60,000 livres on her; this sum Marignane was prepared to advance, provided that he should be repaid at the old lady's death. To this arrangement it was necessary to obtain the consent of the Marquis de Mirabeau, for he had stipulated that when Emilie came in to her grandmother's money the capital should be placed in his hands on condition that he paid the young couple five per cent. on it.

Since the Marquis de Mirabeau flatly and contemptuously refused to agree to Marignane's proposal, nothing came of it, and Mirabeau was left to struggle on as best he could, with the result that when in October, 1773, his son, Victor,

was born, he had to sell his wife's jewels to meet the expenses of her confinement. The Marquis de Mirabeau had a Te Deum sung in the chapel at Bignon to celebrate the event, but he did not loosen his purse-strings.

Mirabeau was a frequent visitor at the house of the Marquis de Limaye, and his association with this unscrupulous spendthrift helped further to increase his financial troubles. He had borrowed largely from a Jew called Baucaire at usurious interest, and stood indebted to him and his son for over 40,000 livres. Unknown to Mirabeau the Marquis de Limaye guaranteed this debt. On the surface this would appear an innocent and friendly thing to do; but in reality it was not. Mirabeau's debts to Baucaire had been contracted while he was a minor, and it was certain the Jew could never have recovered from him the whole of the sum he claimed, for the Jew had not only charged exorbitant interest, but forced Mirabeau to accept goods valued far above their true worth instead of part of the money alleged to have been advanced to him.

But once the debt had been guaranteed by the Marquis de Limaye, the plea that the borrower was a minor, and had been treated unconscionably, was of no avail, and the Jew could recover the full amount he claimed. Since the Marquis de Limaye was himself a spendthrift and a borrower, it seems probable that it was Baucaire who suggested to him to guarantee Mirabeau's debt, as a condition of making further advances to himself.

Although Mirabeau was incensed at what had been done, he felt that he could not allow de Limaye to be compelled to pay up for him, and entered into a formal engagement to recoup him

if he should be called upon to do so, promising to embody this undertaking in a deed as soon as he attained his majority, for apparently he was not aware of the exact date of his birth and did not know that he had come of age some weeks before.

Had Mirabeau been a minor, his father could of course have used the fact as a defence against any claim made by the Marquis de Limaye as effectively as against the Jews; but as Mirabeau was not a minor his engagement to Limaye became binding. The net result was that Mirabeau was saddled with a liability of over 40,000 livres, whereas but for the inconsiderate or crafty action of his cousin he might successfully have contested the claim against him, or at worst considerably reduced it.

Mirabeau was also making experiments on his father's property which, though costly at the time, would in the long run have greatly improved it. Unfortunately this gave his enemies—and his high-handed behaviour had made him many—a handle for accusing him to his father of squandering his goods; they even went so far as falsely to assert that Mirabeau was cutting down the woods and selling the furniture out of the Château.

The Marquis did not wait to inquire how far these charges were true, but obtained a *lettre de cachet* which ordered his son to go and live in the little town of Manosque and not to quit it on any account. To Manosque, therefore, he went in March, 1774, accompanied by his wife and their baby boy.

Three months later the Marquis employed another and even more terrible weapon than a *lettre de cachet;* he applied for and obtained a sentence of interdiction against his son. The effect of this

sentence was to deprive Gabriel of all civil rights. Vainly did Mirabeau protest against the injustice of this terrible blow; vainly did he appeal to his father's mercy, with expressions of unbounded respect and promises of unbounded submission —the Marquis remained inexorable.

It may indeed be that since at the time the Marquis would not, perhaps could not, pay his son's debts, the simplest way to protect him from his creditors and save him from being imprisoned for debt was to put him " under the King's hand " by means of a *lettre de cachet*, for when this had been done his creditors could not sue him. But if the father's action in obtaining a *lettre de cachet* was, as he himself claimed, protective and not vindictive, the same cannot be said about the sentence of interdiction which deprived his son of all civil rights.

No doubt Mirabeau had been foolish, reckless, extravagant, but the punishment seems so out of proportion to the offences that Mirabeau's bitter resentment at it is easy to understand; and his father's remorseless harshness must, in part at any rate, be held responsible for the son's later misdoings.

Amid all these troubles the home life of Mirabeau and his wife cannot have been a very happy and comfortable one; from the start, though he lavished costly presents on her, he had not been particularly kind to her, and on one occasion, he admits, he struck her, though he tries to extenuate his action by saying it was only a slap and she deserved it.

Mme. de Mirabeau, a rather shallow, flighty, pleasure-loving little woman, was not one to bear this sort of thing patiently and uncomplainingly. So while Mirabeau had sought distraction

from the dulness of his daily life at the Château by visiting his cousin the Marchioness de Limaye, his wife had been carrying on a little flirtation of her own with a young musketeer, Laurent Marie de Gassaud. Since his home was at Manosque, a little town not far from the Château de Mirabeau, he was a near neighbour of the Mirabeaus; and since Emilie had known him before her marriage, and he when in Paris had frequently attended the Marquis de Mirabeau's Tuesday receptions, nothing was more natural than that he should cultivate the acquaintance of the young married couple. He rode and hunted with the husband, and entertained the wife with the latest gossip of the neighbourhood, or anecdotes of life at Paris and Versailles with which he was familiar and she was not.

Mirabeau became jealous and accused his wife of being too familiar with the musketeer, to which she retorted that he was only bringing this charge against her to forestall the complaints she might justly make about the way he himself was carrying on with his cousin. For the moment the storm blew over, but Mirabeau remained watchful and suspicious, even going so far as to open his wife's letters; but he found in them nothing to justify his suspicions.

After a while Gassaud went to Paris, where he promised to visit "the Friend of Men" and tell him what a happy, well-ordered life his son and daughter-in-law were leading!

One day after their removal from the Château to Manosque, however, an indiscriminating letter from Gassaud to Emilie fell into Mirabeau's hands: in this letter Gassaud spoke of Mirabeau as his cruelest enemy! Mirabeau was furious, and told not only Emilie, but Gassaud's parents,

with whom he and his wife were lodging, what he had discovered. A terrible scene ensued, in which Emilie cut but a poor figure; she admitted everything and fell at her husband's feet weeping and imploring pardon. Gassaud's father, mother and uncle also intervened, begging him to spare Gassaud and not challenge him to a duel.

After a while they succeeded in pacifying Mirabeau, who promised to forgive the offenders, but eased his mind by writing an abusive and bombastic letter to Gassaud—

> "What a scoundrel you are!" he wrote—"You for whom hospitality, confidence, gratitude, are nothing, who have not the courage to try and kill me and who have the abominable determination to snatch from me what is worth a thousand times more than my life. Vile seducer! A wife whom I adore, and you know it; who loved me, and you know it; who was virtuous before you made your horrible suggestions, and you know it; a weak creature whom cowardice has destroyed, a poor unfortunate from whom you have snatched every kind of happiness. . . . A wretched creature whom I can destroy crawls at my feet and embraces them. I see her remorse; her repentance disarms me. I remember her sex and age; all my fury falls on the scoundrel who has ruined us both. . . . No matter, your father and your family have saved your life, but do not appear before my eyes for may I be struck by lightning if I would not slay you."

A very pretty piece of rhetoric, as dramatic as it is insincere.

In this trouble Mirabeau sought counsel of his friend, the Countess de Vence—a kindly shrewd woman of the world who was always a good friend to him.

> "What has happened," she wrote to Mirabeau, referring to his wife's infidelity, "happens to three women out of four, and they only differ from Mme. de Mirabeau

by being less imprudent. But I feel that it is dreadful to know all about it, and not to be able to hide from oneself what so many others pretend to be ignorant of. This final misfortune had been reserved for you, but I consider that you will only be making it worse if you bring about your wife's undoing. See in her only the mother of her son who will employ every moment of her life to make you forget her transgression. I don't attempt to extenuate it. Reflect a little, I beg of you, on the inequality which prejudice puts between the husband and the wife, and how unnatural it is that what is allowed to the husband should be rigorously punished in the wife, who very often only follows the example her husband has set her."

In a postscript she advised him to burn the incriminating letter, which he did; but his magnanimity was less than appeared, for when he wrote to Gassaud he had made Emilie enclose a note with his letter, in which she admitted her guilt and asked for the return of her portrait and letters. This note Gassaud returned with the other letters, and Mirabeau took care to preserve it, for it was a valuable weapon which he could use against his wife; and at a later time he did not scruple to use it. For the moment, however, it appeared that his forgiveness both of Emilie and Gassaud was complete.

De Gassaud was about to be married to a daughter of the Marquis de Tourette, and it seemed probable that the scandal about him and Mme. de Mirabeau would cause the marriage to be broken off. With what at first sight appears to be quixotic generosity Mirabeau, heedless of the fact that he was forbidden to leave Manosque, hurried off to the Château de Tourette, which was twenty leagues away, and did not leave it until he had persuaded the Marquis de Tourette to allow the marriage to take place.

Mirabeau gives as a reason for this extraordinarily generous behaviour his desire "not to be only half generous", and to protect his wife's reputation. But whatever the motive of his journey, by leaving Manosque without permission he brought himself into fresh trouble: "Fatal journey!" he exclaimed—"the source of all my misfortunes." Had he returned straight to Manosque, his absence might not have been discovered, or if discovered have been overlooked. But in an evil hour he turned aside on his homeward way to visit Mme. de Cabris at Grasse.

It was nearly two years since they had last met, and during that period the course of Louise's life had not been much smoother than that of her brother's. When her husband, at his father's death, succeeded to his property and title, he seemed all at once to become a changed man. Formerly he had been quiet, dull, phlegmatic; now he indulged in the most reckless extravagance and the wildest irregularities of life. No doubt the man was insane, but this, though it accounts for his extraordinary conduct, did not prevent his wife from suffering terrible consequences from his evil behaviour.

She was not, however, the kind of woman to bear her wrongs meekly, so sought consolation in love affairs of her own, first with M. de Bermondet, whom she met when staying with her mother at Saint-Junien-en-Brie, and later with Briançon, who had seen service in Corsica. Further, she had become involved in a squabble at Grasse which had set the whole society of the place by the ears. It all arose out of female jealousy and petty pique—but its consequences were serious.

Mme. d'Andou, the wife of the chief magistrate,

regarded herself as a sort of Queen of Grasse society, and at her house all the principal people used to gather. When she found that the young and beautiful Marchioness de Cabris was threatening her social supremacy a quarrel arose, and the society of Grasse was divided into a d'Andou faction and a de Cabris faction. Among the latter was a certain M. de Calvi, who avenged the slights, real or imaginary, which Louise suffered at the hands of her rival by writing lampoons on Mme. d'Andou and her friends ; these lampoons were facetiously entitled " Verses in honour of the ladies of Grasse "—though in fact they attributed to the said ladies and their friends the vilest passions and the grossest misconduct.

Had Mme. de Cabris and her circle been content to laugh over de Calvi's spiteful witticisms in private no great harm would have been done, and the whole affair would probably have resulted only in a storm in a tea-cup. But in an evil hour Louise's crazy husband took a hand in the game ; he got his barber, Raybaud, to make a number of copies of the verses and distribute them broadcast throughout the district—nay, worse, he had them printed, and one dark, stormy night went out accompanied by his architect, Orelle, and posted copies of them on the walls, doorposts, etc., all over the town ; he even pasted them on the very doors of the people libelled. M. d'Andou retaliated by using the powers he possessed as chief magistrate of the town to avenge himself. He caused an action to be brought against the Marquis de Cabris, and had two of his accomplices cast into prison ; he even talked of resorting to torture to make them confess their guilt.

Mme. de Cabris tried in vain to effect some

sort of a reconciliation, and at the time Mirabeau came to Grasse in the summer of 1774 the storm was still raging. He stayed only one night, and on the morrow set out for Manosque accompanied by his sister and de Briançon. On the way they stopped to dine with Briançon's aunt, Mme. de la Tour-Roumoules. This lady had for twenty years been at loggerheads with her brother-in-law, the Baron de Villeneuve-Mouans, and the costly lawsuits in which their quarrels had involved her had well nigh ruined her.

A high-road only separated the Baron's property from that of his sister-in-law, and as ill-luck would have it, while she and her guests sat under the chestnut trees near the roadside after dinner, they caught sight of the Baron not many yards away giving directions to some workmen. Now, the Baron was of the d'Andou faction in the quarrel at Grasse, and had not only spoken very disparagingly of Mme. de Cabris, whom he regarded as the prime mover of the whole trouble, but had openly insulted her in the street. When Mirabeau saw the Baron strutting so near at hand he could not contain himself, but, leaping up, rushed across the road to confront his enemy.

The scene itself, though tragic in its consequences, is well nigh farcical ; there they stand wrangling—the Baron, a fat pompous little man of fifty, carrying a parasol, and Mirabeau, a bulky young man in a light blue coat, with his napkin under his arm and no hat on his vast leonine head. Of what they said we have no record—but soon from high words they passed to blows, and Mirabeau, seizing his adversary's parasol, beat him with it until he broke it over his back.

The two combatants then came to a hand-to-hand struggle, and, falling to the ground, rolled over a sunk fence. Mirabeau soon regained his feet, and having dusted his coat and wig and thrown some money to the workman, who had looked on without interfering, rejoined his companions, who were roaring with laughter, as well they might.

The next day he returned with all speed to Manosque—but the damage was done. The Baron brought a criminal action against Mirabeau, charging him with having deliberately laid in wait for him to assassinate him; he had, he complained, been "belaboured with blows, received in the face and elsewhere". When we remember that Mirabeau had thrashed his adversary with his own parasol, we cannot but admire the Baron's extreme delicacy in describing some of the blows as "received elsewhere".

But for Mirabeau it was no laughing matter, since his fracas with the Baron de Mouans, when it became known, proved that he had absented himself from Manosque without leave. This in itself was serious enough, but, to make matters worse, de Mouans obtained from the Parliament at Aix an order for Mirabeau's arrest.

True, when the case was eventually heard two years later, and Mirabeau, who was in Holland, was condemned by default, he was only ordered to pay 6,000 livres damages; yet at the moment no one could tell what the result of the trial might be, or how grave its consequences for the offender. To his father it seemed that the only way to save his son from being brought to trial was to get a fresh *lettre de cachet*, and have him imprisoned in a State prison. This accordingly

he did, and in September Mirabeau was removed to the Château d'If, near Marseilles.

Mirabeau always regarded his father's action on this occasion as harsh and vindictive, and inspired only by a desire to punish him for his disobedience. Perhaps it was natural he should think so, for feeling in the neighbourhood around Grasse was all for him and against de Mouans, whose action in taking legal proceedings against Mirabeau, especially in accusing him of attempted assassination, was regarded as conduct unworthy of a nobleman and an officer. His own relative, the Marquis de Villeneuve, took Mirabeau's side and wrote to him: "Believe me, I always put an infinite difference between a friend who conducts himself as well as you have done on important occasions, and a relative who would dishonour his name, if the dishonour were not personal."

Perhaps it is also true that the Marquis regarded and continued to regard the affair too seriously—treating a youthful escapade as if it were a crime. That he did so we gather from a letter which the Bailli wrote to him at a later date extenuating his nephew's action. "What is there extraordinary," he said, "in the great-nephew of our uncles, the grandson of our father, taking the trouble to dust the coat of an insolent nobleman with a walking stick? Let us say no more of the affairs of de Mouans—he was wrong, for he provoked your fool, and once involved, as he was by his sister, I don't know whether I should not have done as much."

Maybe, too, there was some truth in Mirabeau's remark that, had the sister defamed been Mme. du Saillant and not Mme. de Cabris, his father would have approved rather than condemned

his action in avenging her. Still, when all is said and done, it does seem that the Marquis' chief reason in obtaining a fresh *lettre de cachet* was to save his son from having to stand his trial on a criminal charge, and that on this occasion at any rate his action was not wholly vindictive.

Mirabeau dispatched his wife to Bignon to intercede with his father, but so impecunious were they at the moment that she had to borrow twenty-five louis of the Gassauds to defray the expenses of the journey. He could not have chosen a better mediator for, unknown to him, Emilie had for some time been in correspondence with the Marquis, who in one of his letters to her said: "You will be the worthy point of support and reunion between two honourable houses." Indeed, the language he used in his letters to her was generally affectionate, even flattering.

When Emilie set out for Bignon there is no reason to suppose that she did not honestly intend to do her best to reconcile her father-in-law and her husband. She had to borrow money, as we have seen, for the expenses of the journey and travelled in a hired carriage so dilapidated that it seemed doubtful whether it would ever reach its destination in safety. It was a trying experience for her, since she was a complete stranger to all her husband's relations. She received however a kind welcome from her sister-in-law Caroline, Mme. du Saillant, a genial, jolly, good-natured woman, and soon learned how to steer her course in the rather difficult household.

The Marquis was very much master in his own house, and Emilie's mission was to placate

him. But whoever wished to stand well with the Marquis must be careful to stand well with his mistress, Mme. de Pailly. It therefore behoved Emilie not to ally herself too closely with the Bailli, the only person in the house who was ready to help her honestly and openly, for the Bailli was known to dislike his brother's mistress. As for M. and Mme. du Saillant, they probably detested her as heartily as the Bailli did, but from motives of self-interest were careful to conceal their real feelings.

Emilie's letters to Mirabeau are full of expressions of tenderness and affection, and the earlier ones at any rate have every appearance of sincerity. They had been unfaithful to each other, they had quarrelled, but on Emilie's side the marriage had been one of affection, and Mirabeau's forgiveness of her infidelity may well have rekindled her waning love for him. "God grant," she exclaims, "that we may soon be reunited, for we are not made to be separated;" and again: "But you know, dear heart, that I am always very disposed to follow you or to go and seek you in any place with great joy, I assure you." And referring to her son: "He is, after you, what I love best in the world. Farewell, my love. I embrace you with all my heart." There is no need to multiply quotations, for similar expressions occur in almost every letter.

She was, however, having but ill success in the object of her visit, for the crafty old Marquis fooled her to the top of his bent. He assured her that of all his children Gabriel was the one for whom he had the greatest weakness, and made her believe that the rigour with which her husband was being treated was due to the ministers,

who were punishing him for having left Manosque without leave. Nor was that all—he began little by little to poison her mind against her husband, especially by making her believe that his ill-health and bodily sufferings, which were real enough, were feigned merely to excite pity.

Mirabeau had been removed to the Château d'If on the 20th of September, 1774, leaving his little son, whom he was never to see again, sick at Manosque in the care of the Gassauds. His father had given orders that he was to receive no letters, but this order his wife refused to obey, and though Mirabeau at a later time asserted that she did not trouble to write to him for long he was not speaking the truth, for during the first three or four months of his imprisonment she wrote to him frequently; and her earlier letters at any rate contain many expressions of affection and solicitude which seem sincere.

As time went by, the tone of her letters became less frank, and Mirabeau, who probably perceived this, put her to a practical test; she had said that she was willing to join him and share his lot anywhere, so he bade her join him at the Château d'If. To this she replied that she could not possibly do as he wished because her father had written to her ordering her to remain with the Marquis de Mirabeau.

That such a flimsy excuse could not for a moment deceive her husband is shewn by his answer to her letter containing it—

> "Your heart should have told you that no human authority except force could remove you from my personal supervision, that any advice which deterred you from coming to render me the duties of conjugal tenderness was base, perfidious, despicable advice—any authority which wished to demand it was a usurpation.

> . . . To say to your husband, 'I cannot come to see you, help you, console you', though he earnestly beg you to do so, because my father has forbidden me to budge from here, is to inflict on the husband the most cruel and the least pardonable of outrages."

In the postscript to this letter Mirabeau throws all restraints to the winds and denounces his wife in the bitterest terms—

> "You are a monster: you have shewn my letters to my father. I do not want to destroy you, and I ought to; but my heart bleeds at the idea of sacrificing what it has loved so much. But I do not intend to be, and I will not be, any more your dupe. Drag your infamy where you will. Carry your perfidious duplicity if it is possible even further than you have—Good-bye for ever."

A little later, hearing that her old lover Gassaud was in Paris, Mirabeau wrote to his wife imploring her to withdraw to a convent. It was not till some time had elapsed that Emilie made any answer, and when she did it was only to make frivolous and utterly inadequate excuses for not complying with her husband's request. Reading between the lines we can see that Gassaud's presence in Paris provided her with an inducement to stay there, rather than a motive to leave it.

In one of her letters, Emilie had advised him to "use that magic which you possess when you wish to charm anyone", and this advice he followed. He soon made a friend of the wife of the canteen manager, by whose help he contrived to carry on a correspondence with Mme. de Cabris and others. The method was simple. Certain men who had access to the Château would bring letters concealed in their gaiters and give

them to the canteen keeper's wife, while she would give them Mirabeau's replies to smuggle out of the Château in the same manner.

As at the Ile de Rhé he had won the heart of his gaoler, d'Aulan, so at the Château d'If he succeeded in winning that of d'Alègre: with the result that in May, 1775, the Governor wrote to the Marquis, telling him that his son's behaviour was in all respects exemplary and suggesting that the time had come for him to be liberated.

His uncle the Bailli had also been interceding on his behalf. "Take care," he wrote to his brother—"people persist in thinking you are a little hard to your own family; this one (*i.e.* Gabriel) in the eyes of the public seems only guilty of debts, and to tell the truth, youth has taken a new line in this respect, and if you were to clap in prison all the young folk who are in debt you would see nobody but grey-beards about the streets."

Eventually, but not until several months had elapsed, the Marquis decided, not to pardon his son or release him, but to transfer him from one prison to another. If it was necessary, and perhaps it was, to keep Mirabeau safely out of the way for a time, while the unfortunate fracas with de Mouans was still fresh in men's minds, was it necessary after a year had elapsed to prolong his imprisonment?

The Marquis had influential friends in Maurepas and the Duke de Nivernois: he could obtain *lettres de cachet* to imprison his wife, his son, or his daughter for the asking—could he not, it is natural to ask, have used his influence to compromise his son's quarrel with de Mouans, especially as public sympathy was all on Mirabeau's side? In all probability he could have

done so had he wished, but he preferred to keep his son a prisoner: for he did not in the least believe that Gabriel was a reformed character, he had got on the soft side of his gaoler and bamboozled him, that was all; so the glowing reports which d'Alègre sent of Gabriel's good conduct had no weight with the Marquis.

To add fuel to the flames, the canteen keeper of the Château d'If had written to him complaining that Mirabeau had seduced his wife and encouraged her to rob him. In this complaint there was a certain amount of truth mixed with a good deal of falsehood. That the young woman had been unduly familiar with Mirabeau, there can be little doubt. When her husband discovered what was going on he gave his wife a sound beating, and she, not taking such marital correction in good part, ran away, carrying hers and her husband's savings with her. That Mirabeau encouraged her to run away or to rob her husband, there is not a tittle of evidence; but the canteen keeper's complaint helped to acerbate his father against him, and justified him in his own eyes in considering him as great a scamp as ever.

In the face of d'Alègre's favourable report he could not very well leave Gabriel much longer at the Château d'If, which moreover was nearer than he liked to Grasse, where his other rebellious child, Mme. de Cabris, lived, and he feared a combination of his two recalcitrant children against him. Another prison, therefore, must be found for him, and eventually his father decided on the Château de Joux near Pontarlier in Franche-Comtê.

The Marquis was doomed to pay dearly for his obstinacy, since it was at Pontarlier that the

great romance and great tragedy of Mirabeau's life began, a tragedy which involved the frustration of his father's dearest wish, a posterity to carry on the name and fame of the house of Mirabeau.

CHAPTER IV

PONTARLIER

The Château de Joux was not an attractive residence—" an owl's nest ", Mirabeau calls it—which even in fine weather was often enveloped in mist. The rigour of the climate is illustrated by the fact that when Mirabeau arrived there towards the end of May he found snow on the ground.

The Marquis, with his usual kindly forethought, had taken care to put his son's new gaoler on his guard against the young man's wiles. His method, he told him, is to play on the good nature of his gaoler and then sham sickness. " As to his illnesses," he said, " we don't believe in them, and besides, we are not doctors."

But Mirabeau's confinement in the Château de Joux was not destined to be as rigorous as his father had intended, for the governor, the Count de Saint Mauris, apparently set little store by the Marquis' warning and allowed Mirabeau to leave the Château during the daytime, and mingle in such society as the neighbouring town of Pontarlier afforded, on condition that he gave his word to return to the Château at night.

The most important person in Pontarlier was the Marquis de Monnier, a member of the nobility of the robe—a law lord, perhaps one might call

MADAME DE MONNIER

(Photo, Giraudon)

him. He had quarrelled with his only daughter, who had married against his wishes and without his consent. So in order to avenge himself on her he had married a second time at the age of sixty-five, in hopes that he might have an heir to whom he might leave his property.

His second wife, who was forty-eight years younger than he, was Marie Therêse Sophie Richard, daughter of the Marquis de Ruffey. Her parents had at one time thought of marrying her to Buffon, but the distinguished naturalist had sense enough not to wed a girl nearly fifty years his junior. It does not appear that her parents put any pressure on Sophie to marry the Marquis de Monnier, but a girl of seventeen has little knowledge of the world and can hardly forecast what the life of a young girl married to a man old enough to be her grandfather will be like.

Sophie found the early days of her married life dull and wearisome in the extreme, as is evident from her own account of them—

> "When I married," she said, "I wished to apply myself to what I called my duties, and persuade myself that I was happy by making others believe it; but the more I persisted in this idea the heavier the burden grew, and the year I passed like a slave and alone with the Marquis was cruelly wearisome and sad. I never had a halfpenny; I was incessantly scolded about household affairs; I could neither receive nor visit anybody: my whole life was passed in playing whist as the Marquis' partner. Well, though I lived isolated and was not even allowed to dance, people were already talking about me, and the Marquis showed himself more and more teasy and more jealous, without knowing of whom or what."

After they had been married eighteen months the Marquis relaxed the rigour of his regimen

a little. Sophie was allowed to see a certain amount of company, and even to take part in private theatricals; but the damage was done, for from the bottom of her heart she resented being tied to a stingy, quarrelsome, spiteful old man, whom she could neither love nor respect.

Sophie was not beautiful. Her face, if we may judge by the portrait of her attributed to Heinsius, was rather long and thin, with a somewhat startled expression due perhaps to the absence of eyelashes. Her mouth was large, and on her left eyelid was a very noticeable pimple; but her eyes, when her spirit was moved and her soul shone through them, atoned for all. But, if not beautiful, she had her admirers all the same, for the girl-wife of an old man was at that period regarded as fair game for anyone who was minded to make love to her.

Among her admirers was Saint Mauris, who, though nearly as old as her husband, was paying her marked attention. The description which, according to Mirabeau, she gave of him is worth quoting—

> "He was the only person who could penetrate my house. He undertook to distract my solitude; he assured me he was in love with me, and that he could serve my turn all the better—that, being a friend of M. de Monnier, my reputation and domestic repose had nothing to fear from his attentions. I repeat his very words. His declaration seemed to me very ridiculous, and the motives with which he supported it very odious. M. de Monnier—as young as M. de Saint Mauris, whatever the latter may say—is certainly more pleasing.
>
> "In the whole person of M. de Saint Mauris I saw nothing but what was very repulsive; he is never so ugly as when be becomes tender. His airs of a commanding officer wearied me as much as his manners of

a witty corporal. In a word, his love gave me so great a desire to make fun of him that I did not spare him. Further, I assured him it was unworthy of an honourable man to regard the confidence of his friend as an opportunity of deceiving him, and that this way of thinking was enough to keep me at a distance from a man capable of avowing it, even if I thought him the handsomest and most pleasing of mortals."

But Saint Mauris had not been Sophie's only admirer. A more formidable lover was M. de Sandoncq, a young man of about her own age, handsome, well-built and modest. They acted the parts of lovers together in private theatricals, and, as sometimes happens in such circumstances, what began in pretence ended in earnest, at any rate as far as the man was concerned. They corresponded with one another, and but for Sandoncq's departure from Pontarlier the love affair might have become serious. As it was, Sophie's heart had been but lightly touched, and she did not feel the loss of her lover deeply.

Sandoncq's place was taken by Montperreux, another young soldier who, unlike his predecessor, was neither handsome nor modest; and looking back at events afterwards, Sophie could hardly understand why Montperreux had had any attraction for her. She could only explain it on the supposition that it is hard for a woman as young, as bored, as pestered as she was, to hear herself continually told she is loved without being affected by it. Anyway, she was indiscreet enough not only to write to Montperreux, but to give him her portrait; and when he left Pontarlier for Metz he carried both the letters and the portrait with him.

It was through Saint Mauris that Mirabeau and Sophie first became acquainted, for they met at a dinner party given by the governor.

A few days after they met again in the street, and Mirabeau noticed in Sophie a sort of wit and a manner of feeling, and observing, that he had not expected to find at the foot of Mount Jura, while he inspired in her a favourable impression which gave her confidence. Sophie, in fact, fell in love with Mirabeau, not at first sight, for she said she did not know whether he was handsome or ugly, but at first hearing, for it was that beguiling voice of his which won her heart.

When a little later they met at a ball at Montpetot, Saint Mauris noticed the interest Mirabeau and Sophie took in one another, and perhaps out of jealousy afforded Mirabeau little opportunity of going to Pontarlier; though the reason he gave Mirabeau for the restrictions he put on him was that he ran risks by frequenting the society of the place. This Mirabeau did not believe, for he was convinced that the governor's real motive was jealousy.

Even before this Mirabeau had begun a flirtation or intrigue with Mlle. Michaud, a sister of the King's procurer, who often came to meet him at her brother's house at Franc Bourg, which was not far from the Château; and to throw dust in Saint Mauris's eyes he began to be very attentive to this young lady—his "Belinde", as he called her. Subsequently he assured Sophie that there had never been anything in his affair with Mlle. Michaud, and that at Franc Bourg he had spent more of his time reading the brother's books than flirting with the sister. But a statement so obviously intended to allay Sophie's jealousy need not be taken too seriously.

Shortly after Mirabeau's arrival at Pontarlier public festivities were held in honour of the

King's coronation, and Saint Mauris, with an eye to royal favours and preferment, took an active part in organizing them. Since in this matter he sought the assistance of Mirabeau, and since the Marquis de Monnier and his wife, as the principal residents in the town were naturally present at many of the festivities, Mirabeau and Sophie had ample opportunity of being together. Probably Mirabeau had not yet fallen in love with Sophie, but was only gratified with the knowledge that he had made an impression on the heart of the chief lady of the place.

The day after the rejoicings came to an end he spent at Saint Mauris' request in writing a pamphlet describing the coronation festivities at Pontarlier, and on the morrow hastened into the town to visit Sophie. But the bird had flown: Sophie and her husband had already set out for the Château de Nans, where they intended to spend the rest of the summer.

The only house in Pontarlier in which he felt he could be an intimate was thus for the time being closed to Mirabeau, and he was thrown on his own resources. As usual he turned to study, and began to compose a memoir on the salt mines of Franche Comté; as usual, too, he turned to a woman, and continued the intrigue he had already begun with Mlle. Michaud. But as the weeks dragged wearily away his lot became more and more irksome, and he wrote a pathetic letter to his uncle begging him to persuade his father to set him at liberty.

> "Assuredly," he wrote, "it is not ruinous expenses which have brought such great humiliations on me, given me so great remorse and robbed me of nearly a year of liberty, that I have been detained in a fort; it is for an affair, imprudent maybe in appearance but honourable

at bottom, which I shall never disavow, which I should win before every tribunal in the world; it is for this unfortunate affair that I have been arrested; but is not such a long detention likely to make the public think I have been guilty of graver and perhaps more dishonourable offences; and well, what more have I done? Let me be told. To whom should I address this language? My dear uncle; must I abandon the hope of making my ill-considered acts forgotten—the hope of transmitting to my son a name which shall never lose by my fault the distinction which you and my father have won for it? Must I be for ever excluded from the career where my conduct and efforts aided by your advice, might give me the means of being some day useful and distinguished in my turn? . . .

"Believe me, there are men who ought to be employed, and I am of the number; activity, which can achieve everything and without which nothing can be done, becomes turbulent and may become dangerous when it has neither object nor occupation. But whatever my father's designs may be, whether he wishes to assist or destroy my ambition, be good enough at least to demand my liberty of him; doubtless he does not wish to drive me mad or reduce me to frenzy: I feel my health declining, and the greater the efforts I make to keep it in check the more my boiling head suffers; in a month's time snowdrifts are going to bury me in a country destitute of all moral resources; this outlook is cruel; my condition is grievous and painful; it will get worse, it will become too hard for me to bear and you will regret then, but in vain, a nephew whose only wish was to live for your satisfaction and the interest of his family, his name and his Country."

This letter the Bailli communicated to his brother, adding that he would only answer it if he wished and as he wished. But the Marquis, obstinate as usual, paid no heed to it.

It seems to have been during Sophie's absence from Pontarlier that Mirabeau realized he was in danger of loving her as he had never loved any woman before. Indiscreet flirtations and

sordid intrigues he had had in plenty—false imitations of love, he called them—but a great passion he had not yet known; and, now he found himself face to face with one, he feared it. "I was troubled; I was terribly afraid of love," he said. It was not the attraction of beauty, nor the pleasure of feeling that he was loved and admired, nor community of tastes, nor the desire for a sympathetic ear to which he might confide his sorrows, which drew him to Sophie, but the overmastering conviction that she was the one woman in the world for him.

Doubting where such a passion might lead him, fearing it might cripple his career and frustrate his ambitions, he tried to master it. Not only did he refrain from visiting the de Monniers when they returned to Pontarlier, he even wrote to his wife, with whom he had not corresponded for some months, imploring her to join him at Joux, from whence he said they might easily escape to some foreign country, where he would be able to take service in the army. He had but one object in making this proposition —to save himself from his fatal love for Mme. de Monnier.

To this request his wife replied with a firm and frigid refusal. "I confess," she wrote, "that the proposition you have made in your last letter has so embarrassed me that I have not known how to answer it, since it is impossible to carry it out. I will not attempt here to enter into the numberless inconveniences which render your project impossible to realize." There is something almost comic in the way the letter concludes: "I finish, sir, by renewing the assurance of the tenderest and most inviolable attachment which will end only with my life".

"Tenderest and most inviolable attachment" indeed! Yet she would not share his confinement at the Château de Joux, nor embark with him on a new life wherein he might have achieved honour and fortune, as many a Frenchman before him had done in the service of a foreign prince. No doubt, Emilie did not and could not foresee the dire consequences to which her refusal to rejoin her husband would lead; nevertheless, she cannot escape her share of the blame for the tragedy which followed.

After receiving this letter, Mirabeau made no further efforts to keep away from Mme. de Monnier, and ere long the crisis came. Pressed by the Marquis de Monnier himself to renew his visits, Mirabeau did so, and daily became more and more intimate. The efforts of Mlle. de Saint Belin, a great friend of Sophie, to sow discord between Mirabeau and her naturally failed; for Sophie took the part of her lover and quarrelled with her friend. "Whoever despises Gabriel despises Sophie," she said, "for she loves him."

Of the course of their love affair, Mirabeau himself gives an account in a series of dialogues he wrote while in prison at Vincennes. His first intention had been to write a drama about himself and Sophie; but, finding the difficulties insurmountable, he wrote a series of dialogues instead. How characteristic of the man to make copy out of the grand passion of his life; and yet the fact that he did so is no proof that his love for Sophie was not sincere. The strenuous efforts he had made to save himself from falling under her spell are a convincing proof that it was.

Some weeks after her return to Pontarlier, Sophie confided to Mirabeau the anxiety she felt

because Montperreux had not returned her letters and portrait. The letters, she told him, were bad enough, and she feared Montperreux might be showing them to others; but the portrait was even more damning evidence of her indiscretion, and she was terrified lest her husband should discover that she had given it to Montperreux, for she knew what construction he would put on her action. In one of the dialogues, Mirabeau represents her as saying: "I know M. de Monnier—a dissembler by nature, he affects security from motives of self-esteem. If the least circumstance of this love affair, or even a well-grounded suspicion reaches him, he will break out by a clap of thunder."

If that should happen she intended to forsake the world and seek refuge in a convent; but this was a solution of the problem which did not at all commend itself to Mirabeau.

> "Madame," he cried, "your alarm is too excessive. M. de Monnier shall know nothing: your portrait, your letters, shall be restored to you: they shall not remain in the hands of scoundrels who pollute them."
>
> "And who will take them from them, sir?"
>
> "I, madam."
>
> "You—good heavens, and by what right?"
>
> "The right of every honourable man to prevent crime and defend innocence."

At first Sophie was unwilling to accept this offer; she feared he was running too great a risk by undertaking a journey so far from his place of detention as Metz; she feared that Montperreux, who was a regular fire-eater, would involve him in a duel. But Mirabeau would take no refusal; he was, he urged, only offering to do for her what he would do for a man friend who

needed his help—he was acting not as a lover but as a brother. Sophie, on the other hand, saw that if she allowed Mirabeau to act as her champion she was giving him a hold over her; her love affair with Montperreux had been indiscreet but innocent—with Mirabeau, she foresaw it would be otherwise.

> "Have I asked for gratitude from you?" he asked.
> "No, truly," she replied; "but the less you ask it of me the more I owe it to you. It is too evident for me to conceal it from myself. In vain would you repeat that you only wish to be my friend—you have already spoken to me as a lover. I shall only become dearer to you when you have exposed yourself to danger for me. At your age a man is not a friend of a young woman, and I do not want to be your mistress. Even if experience of the past and fear of the future did not make me shrink from any love affair, I should have a thousand objections against you. You are only at Pontarlier for a little while, and I can't love for a little while. Absence, perhaps for ever, would make me suffer cruelly and render me very unhappy. I am not vain enough to doubt that the women of the great towns would soon chase me from your heart. You are twenty-six—soon love will not be the chief occupation of your life. Ambition calls you and will seduce you."

And though Mirabeau assured her that a private life was all he desired, Sophie's diagnosis of his character was correct, as the future proved.

That Mirabeau made the proposed journey to Metz, and brought back the incriminating letters and portrait is improbable, for there is reason to believe that Montperreux had the tactful delicacy to sell them to the Marquis de Monnier, who did not justify Sophie's prognostications by making a scene, but apparently kept the matter to himself.

Mirabeau's gallant offer to retrieve the letters and portrait for her had none the less served its turn; it convinced Sophie of his devotion and weakened her resistance to his constant entreaties. Vainly did she plead that if she consented to anything which diminished her lover's respect for her it would lessen his love; vainly did she suggest a purely platonic friendship, Mirabeau would brook no denial, and on the 13th of December, 1775, the climax was reached.

The Marquis de Monnier remained or pretended to remain ignorant of what was going on, but Saint Mauris was not equally blind.

It is false sentiment as well as bad morality to condone adultery, or to cast a halo of romance around it. It is always evil, it is usually sordid. Still, all sinners, though blameworthy are not equally so, and even the severest moralist may feel some pity for Mirabeau and Sophie. Society in their time and country made light of the sin, provided it was discreetly managed and no open scandal resulted. The Marquis de Mirabeau, who professed himself a good Catholic and was horrified at the scepticism of the philosophers, lived openly with his mistress, Mme. de Pailly. Mirabeau's friend, Mme. de Vence, when warning him not to pay attention to her daughter, had playfully added: "Wait till she's married—then you can do as you like." He had been harshly treated by his father, who had already imprisoned him three times; he had never before met with real tenderness, affection or sympathy; his wife had been unfaithful to him. We may deplore, but can we altogether wonder at his yielding to the lure of illicit love?

And Sophie—does not she, too, merit compassion? Married at seventeen to a stingy,

morose, teasy man, nearly fifty years her senior—whose motive for marrying her had been a desire for vengeance on his daughter—is it strange that she should lose her heart to a younger man? She was brave and tender-hearted, was Sophie, capable of wonderful fidelity and self-denial, with a vein of melancholy in her character which always made her think of resorting to suicide when things went wrong; petulant, stubborn and unreasonable at times, as some of her letters to her mother shew, but a good woman at bottom—a woman who, had she been happily married in her youth, would probably have led a blameless life and brought happiness and contentment to those about her—a woman whose chief fault it was to love not wisely but too well.

And what of the Marquis de Monnier—does he deserve our sympathy? Assuredly yes, if he was a well-meaning old man grossly deceived by a faithless young wife and her unscrupulous lover. Mirabeau asserted over and over again that de Monnier was not deceived, but knew quite well what was going on; he even says that the Marquis deliberately connived at it, until it began to cause a public scandal. It was notorious that the old man's sole reason for marrying again was to get an heir, so that he might disinherit his daughter. He had been married for four years, and the marriage was still childless; while, if we may believe Sophie, he had good reason to exclaim with Falstaff: "I am old—I am old!"

It is, then, not wholly incredible that he might have been willing to father another man's child, so as to spite his daughter. At any rate, in the circumstances, it was a plausible accusation to make against him.

Plausible, yes; but we have no proof save Mirabeau's bare assertion, and as a witness his almost unequalled gift of shameless mendacity renders him unsatisfactory. Further, it was very much to Mirabeau's interest that people should believe that de Monnier had winked at his wife's guilt. There is, too, some evidence that the Marquis only began to suspect it at the time of Mirabeau's flight from Pontarlier; or, if he had suspicions, was not convinced that they were correct. A very different thing from deliberate connivance. So the days and weeks went by and Sophie's husband either did not or would not notice what was happening under his very nose.

Twelfth Night came, and when lots were drawn it fell to Mirabeau to be King of the Revels, and he in turn chose Sophie to be his Queen. This so pleased the Marquis de Monnier that he decided to give a ball in their honour on the 14th of January. But at this point Saint Mauris intervened, and informed Mirabeau that in future he intended to keep him a strict prisoner in the fort. Mirabeau always believed that it was jealousy which prompted the Governor to take this step, for he too, we know, had been paying attentions to Mme. de Monnier, but unsuccessfully.

> "I was only about forty or forty-five years younger than M. de Saint Mauris," said Mirabeau, "and if I was nearly as ugly as he I was at least a more honourable man. He soon discerned the understanding that existed between Mme. de Monnier and me; his furious looks announced his resentment to me, and soon his epigrams gave vent to it; he tried to stir up the gossip of the town against Mme. de Monnier, as well as the zeal of the priests and other writers of anonymous libels."

There is probably some exaggeration here. Still, Saint Mauris had cause to be jealous, and doubtless jealousy may have had some influence on his action. But he had other and weightier reasons for depriving Mirabeau of the partial liberty he had hitherto allowed him. During his residence at the Château de Joux, Mirabeau had arranged with a publisher called Fauche, at Neufchatel, to publish his *Essai sur le despotisme* anonymously. Copies of the book, which contained much displeasing to the Government, had been introduced into France, and orders had been sent from Paris to Saint Mauris to seek out the author, possibly because Mirabeau was suspected of being the culprit. Unluckily, Mirabeau had given the publisher a promissory note, which by some means or other came into the hands of Saint Mauris. This provided him with conclusive evidence that Mirabeau was the author of the *Essai sur le despotisme*.

In self-defence he was bound to take vigorous action, else he might have found himself accused of conniving at the publication of a seditious work. Moreover, since Mirabeau was a prisoner "under the King's hand", it was illegal for him to sign a promissory note, and Saint Mauris might have been censured for having dealt too leniently with him in allowing him out on parole; for obviously, if Mirabeau had been kept a prisoner in the fort all the time, he could not have had business dealings with a publisher in Switzerland.

When Saint Mauris told him that in future he would not be permitted to leave the fort Mirabeau pleaded earnestly with him to relent, but in vain. All he could obtain was a four days' respite, which would allow him to be present at the Marquis de Monnier's ball. That Saint

Mauris granted this respite rather suggests that jealousy was not his chief motive for depriving Mirabeau of the liberty he had hitherto enjoyed.

Ere the four days had elapsed, Mirabeau escaped, for, after attending de Monnier's ball, he did not return to the Château. He took farewell of Saint Mauris in a very bitter letter, in which he accuses the Governor of having laid traps for him and done his best to ruin him, by irritating his father against him. "If my sojourn in this country displeased your vanity," he continued, "if you imputed to me the disdain of a respectable lady whom you have odiously slandered, because you could not seduce her; ought you to have yielded to such motives, when it was a question of saving a nobleman, a man, an unfortunate person?"

That Mirabeau thought fit to send a copy of this letter to the Marquis de Monnier may or may not shew that he sincerely believed in the unworthiness of Saint Mauris' motives, but it shews clearly enough that he was convinced that either the Marquis was utterly ignorant of his relations with Sophie, or was ready and willing to condone them

Some of the events that befell Mirabeau during the seven months that followed his escape from the Château de Joux are so utterly and preposterously incredible that, were we to find them related in a novel, we should condemn the author of it for violating every canon of probability. But that these events did happen in France in the year 1776, is vouched for by the most irrefutable contemporary evidence—letters written at the time by those who took part in them.

As we read the record of hairbreadth escapes, and madcap schemes successfully executed, the

world in which Mirabeau and his contemporaries lived and moved seems to us almost as fantastic and unreal as that of, say, a Gilbert and Sullivan opera : but there are the letters and documents which prove the facts, so that we are driven to exclaim with the old dramatist : " A mad world, my masters ! "

CHAPTER V

THE ELOPEMENT

Saint Mauris had naturally been in communication with Gabriel's father, and had asked him how he wished his son to be treated in future. The Marquis replied that he wished him kept in a prison wholesome and dry, but well bolted and with the windows well barred, and above all that he was not to be allowed to receive letters or to write to anybody.

Mirabeau, no doubt, had made a shrewd guess at the kind of discipline to which his father would subject him, and it is not to be wondered at that the prospect of solitary confinement, in a prison whose Governor he had mortally offended, should inspire him with the determination to make a bid for liberty at any price.

When he failed to return to the Château after the ball on the 14th of January, he did not at once leave Pontarlier. For two days he remained concealed in Madame de Monnier's rooms, but the lady's maid, who was in their confidence, having warned them that the servants in the kitchen were beginning to become suspicious on account of the quantity of food that Mirabeau was eating, he thought it wisest to seek an asylum elsewhere, and for a month remained in hiding in Pontarlier, visiting Sophie from time to time at nights.

Unfortunately, on the 16th of February the maid who was in their confidence was, for some reason, not at her post to admit Mirabeau when he arrived, and another maid who met him in the courtyard, supposing him to be a thief, gave the alarm, and the men-servants armed with sticks and pitchforks rushed out to seize the intruder. Mirabeau, who had taken refuge in the garden, saved the situation by cool-headed audacity. Instead of running away or trying to hide, he came forward to meet his would-be captors and asked them what they were looking for.

"Sir," replied the coachman who had taken the lead, "we did not imagine it was you."

Thereupon Mirabeau commanded one of the lackeys to lead him to the Marquis; for what followed we shall quote the account given in one of the "dialogues", in which Sophie is supposed to be describing the incident to a friend—

> "The Count, in the midst of so unforeseen and disquieting a crisis, collected his wits in the few moments it took to mount the stairs, entered M. de Monnier's room, embraced him and told him a circumstantial and probable story. He had come from Berne, he was going straight on to Paris to present himself to the minister; he had arranged his route so as to enter Pontarlier in the evening, not wishing to pass by without seeing us and thanking us for our kindness. He had chosen the servants' supper time for entering the house so as not to let any of the servants into his confidence. He had met Marie by chance in the courtyard; she had not recognized him, the alarm had been given, and he had been seen, pursued and discovered by all our people. He asked the Marquis to ring for them and tell them to keep silence. This precaution was absolutely necessary, said he, to secure his retreat, and to shut the mouths of those who could retail this news soon enough for there to be time for him to be arrested. Notice with what

art he seized the only means to save appearances for me, and to make his nocturnal entrance into my house seem natural in the eyes of so many witnesses.

"The Marquis promptly rang the bell. The servants who would never have imagined that the Count would have dared present himself to M. de Monnier, were stupified at seeing us all three together. M. de Monnier gave his orders in a very firm tone, and they withdrew. The Count resumed and continued his conversation with the same tranquillity. He drew from his pocket a letter from his father, which he composed on the spur of the moment to suit his views, made remarks about it, and talked with as much freedom as if he had been paying an ordinary visit. M. de Monnier offered him money which he refused, and using the talk his arrival had caused as a pretext withdrew half an hour later, announcing that he should set out at daybreak. I went with him to the door of the sitting-room, and he told me he should return to his friend's house. The Marquis had not a shadow of a suspicion."

The concluding words: "The Marquis had not a shadow of suspicion", are surely convincing proof that Mirabeau knew that up to that time, whatever the servants knew or suspected, de Monnier himself was wholly unaware of the intrigue between his wife and her lover. The words, we must remember, are attributed to Sophie, in a dialogue written by Mirabeau; is it then conceivable that he would have put such words into her mouth, or have made her describe the whole incident as he does, had he known that the Marquis had been conniving at their liaison all the time.

Granted that de Monnier's blindness is amazing—so amazing that at times one is almost inclined to believe the infamous charge Mirabeau makes against him—yet this dialogue clears him. When Mirabeau wrote the dialogues he was writing for Sophie and himself alone, and had no interest

in concealing the truth; the charge he brought against de Monnier is contained in letters which he knew the police official Boucher would read, and his object in making it was not to recall the truth to Sophie's mind, but to insinuate a falsehood into Boucher's.

Feeling that he could no longer remain safely in Pontarlier, he left the town a few days later and made his way to Vitteaux, where he remained in hiding for a week in the house of the Chevalier de Grandchamps, waiting for Sophie to join him there that they might elope together.

This was not his original intention when he escaped from Saint Mauris' control, for he had written to the Minister of War, the Count de Saint Germain, on the 15th of January a pathetic letter imploring to be allowed to serve in the army, in which in fact he held a commission as Captain of Dragoons, although he had not been attached to any regiment since his return from Corsica.

To this appeal he received no reply, which was only natural as Saint Germain showed the letter to his father. Mirabeau next tried appealing to his father; and his friend Michaud, the King's Proctor at Pontarlier, also wrote to the Marquis on his behalf. The Marquis replied in a manner which showed that he had no intention of relenting; one passage in the letter suggests that he thought the best thing his son could do was to go abroad "refractory to the successive orders of the King which are still in force, his native land is not, I think, a safe country for him".

Michaud returned to the charge with an earnest appeal to the Marquis to save his son from ruin: "not to save your son at this moment is to destroy him . . . if he has no hope of being

received back into your favour he will flee, and certainly you will regret it". The only reply the Friend of Men deigned to give was a letter casting his son off for good and all.

Mirabeau had thoughts of the desperate expedient of going to Paris and seeking an interview with the Count de Saint Germain, confident that "a quarter of an hour's conversation would seduce him sooner than a hundred letters". Mirabeau always had a great belief in his own ability, that quality which in great men we call consciousness of innate power, in lesser ones conceit. His mother, however, to whom he communicated the plan, dissuaded him from it, for the risk, she thought, was too great to run.

That he did not flee abroad on receiving his father's crushing letter was due to one thing and only one—his infatuation for Mme. de Monnier. "I was on the frontier," he says, "certain of finding in foreign lands, provided that I went alone, the advantages my youth, my birth and my sword could procure me. . . . If I remained it was a sacrifice I offered to love, and to love alone."

Though duped for the moment, the Marquis de Monnier soon began to grow suspicious; he questioned his servants about Mirabeau's nocturnal visit, and their answers confirmed his suspicions. He accordingly ordered them not to obey his wife's instructions, and to keep a sharp look-out that Mirabeau did not visit her in future. As soon as Sophie learned from her lady's maid what her husband had done, she went to him and, upbraiding him for his odious suspicions, demanded to go to her parents at Dijon. To this demand the Marquis yielded, so

on the 23rd of February she left Pontarlier for Dijon, which she reached on the 25th. Three days later, Mirabeau also arrived at Dijon.

That Sophie had not joined Mirabeau at Vitteaux was due to the precaution her husband had taken of sending her under a sufficient escort to prevent her escaping on the road.

On the very night of his arrival at Dijon, Mirabeau saw Sophie in the theatre ; the meeting was perhaps accidental, for she reminded him later that they were both agitated at seeing one another again, and that she trembled as she passed near him. They could not speak to one another, for Sophie was accompanied by her mother and Mlle. de Saint Belin. She had, however, found some means of letting her lover know later in the evening she was going to a ball given by M. de Montherot, Grand Provost of Burgundy. With superb audacity Mirabeau went there also, and had himself announced as the Marquis de Lancefoudras.

Sophie's mother had never seen Mirabeau, but when the stranger asked a dance of Mlle. de Saint Belin, her suspicions were aroused, and she immediately took her daughter home. Nay, more, she took care to let the Grand Provost know that the so-called Marquis de Lancefoudras was none other than the Count de Mirabeau, a prisoner under the King's hand who had escaped from the Château de Joux.

One would naturally have expected that the Grand Provost would at once have had Mirabeau arrested and sent to prison, but he did nothing of the kind. True, he caused him to be brought before him, but Mirabeau's persuasive eloquence soon won the Grand Provost over to his side. Instead of committing him to prison, he merely

demanded of him a promise not to leave Dijon; further, he not only connived at Mirabeau passing under an assumed name, but took steps to prevent his subordinates from discovering his identity; he even went further and wrote to the Minister, Malesherbes, on his behalf.

A little reflection shows us that Montherot's conduct was not as strange as it appears at first sight. True, he knew that Mirabeau was a runaway prisoner who had escaped from his gaoler, but then he was neither a criminal nor a prisoner of State, but an unfortunate young man whose own father had had him imprisoned. And those offences which seemed so unpardonable in the eyes of the Friend of Men—may well have seemed but bagatelles to Montherot.

A young nobleman, heir to a marquisate, had been kept short of cash by a niggardly father, and had got over head and ears in debt by borrowing money at usurious interest. Imprudent of course, but only what nineteen out of twenty young men would do in the same circumstances. Then he had broken his own parasol over the back of a cowardly old fellow who had insulted his sister—well, if the old fellow did not like being thrashed with his own parasol he ought to have called Mirabeau out and fought him like a gentleman, and not gone seeking the protection of the law courts and accusing his assailant of attempting to assassinate him: if you mean to assassinate a man you don't do it with a parasol.

The young man had been a bit rash perhaps, but had only acted as a young man of spirit naturally would. And what about the Marchioness de Ruffey's complaint that the monster was making love to her married daughter, the wife

of the Marquis de Monnier? Well, well, if people will go and marry girls of seventeen to men of between sixty and seventy, what do they expect?

In some such way must Montherot have viewed the case, for in him Mirabeau clearly found a friend and protector, and when orders arrived from Paris that Mirabeau was to be sent back to the Château de Joux he calmly returned them!

Sophie's relations, when they found that Mirabeau was to all intents and purposes at large in Dijon, were in constant dread that he would carry her off. They therefore kept strict watch on all her actions. Her sister, the Canoness, shared her bedroom, but even so they did not feel secure that Sophie might not get up very quietly in the middle of the night and run away to join her lover. To prevent such a catastrophe the Canoness thought of a simple device; she tied one end of a long ribbon round Sophie's foot and the other end round her own arm, so that if Sophie moved it was bound to wake her sister.

Sophie, who naturally resented such treatment, retaliated by constantly jerking the ribbon and waking her sister several times every night. It was a contest of endurance, and at last Sophie won. At the end of a fortnight the Canoness could stand it no longer, and anxious no doubt to get a good night's rest asked Mlle. de Saint Belin to take her place in Sophie's room. This gave Sophie her chance; she waited till Mlle. de Saint Belin was sound asleep, and then quietly slipping out of bed, for to-night there was no ribbon attachment, escaped from the house to meet Mirabeau at a place which he calls the Perspective,

but which there is reason to suppose was the Vauxhall, a dancing and concert room. She did not return home till morning.

A week later the order came that Mirabeau was to be imprisoned in the Château de Dijon, and this order Montherot had perforce to carry out. Three days afterwards, yielding to Mirabeau's wishes, Sophie returned to her husband.

M. de Changey, the Governor of the Château, was soon won over to Mirabeau's side and interested himself warmly on his prisoner's behalf. Malesherbes, who was opposed to the use of *lettres de cachet*, and thought the Marquis de Mirabeau was punishing his son unduly, appointed a commission to consider the case: the commission recommended that Mirabeau should be detained for ten months at Pierre-en-Scise, near Lyons.

This decision did not at all satisfy the Marquis, who had learned that Mme. de Cabris had gone to stay in a convent at Lyons, for he feared and distrusted his daughter more than he did his son. He was aware that Gabriel was in correspondence with his mother, a fact which made him desire to keep his son a prisoner at all costs. He accordingly got the place of detention altered to Dourlens in Alsace. This, however, was the place to which above all others Mirabeau most dreaded to be sent. Accordingly, when the order for his removal thither arrived, he took to his bed, and since, owing to insomnia and chest trouble he really was ill, the doctors certified that he was not fit to be moved. So for the present he remained at Dijon.

Not long after he received a message from Malesherbes advising him to go abroad, and warning him that he could do nothing more for

him since he was about to retire into private life. Malesherbes evidently thought a prisoner such as Mirabeau was not to be blamed for breaking out of prison, for as he replied to the Marquis' reproaches on this subject: "It is natural for a man to seek liberty". The retirement of Malesherbes was a great blow to Mirabeau, for he felt that it left him absolutely at his father's mercy, and that for aught he could tell he might be kept a prisoner as long as his father lived—not a pleasant prospect for a young man of twenty-seven, whose father as likely as not might live another twenty years.

Accordingly he decided to act on Malesherbes's advice, and go into voluntary exile. His first attempt to escape on the 15th of May was unsuccessful, for Montherot had got wind of his intention, and fearing he might be suspected of conniving if Mirabeau got clear away, took steps to stop him. Ten days later, however, he effected his escape; Mlle. de Saint Belin's brother lent him a horse, and an ex-gendarme, who called himself the Chevalier de Macon, and through whom he had been in communication with Mme. de Cabris, accompanied him. They managed to cross the border into Switzerland by night, and reached Verrières, a village which was only about nine miles from Pontarlier, on the 2nd of June. There Sophie was to join him as soon as possible, for with her also Mme. de Cabris had been in communication, through the agency of a pedlar called Jeanret.

Twice Sophie attempted to escape, but was detected by a servant who caught her dressing herself in man's clothes and promptly reported the matter to her sister, for the Canoness was staying at Pontarlier, since the de Ruffeys did

not trust the Marquis de Monnier to keep a close enough watch over his wife. And in this they were justified, for when Mme. de Ruffey wrote to him urging him to take every possible precaution against his wife running away, he replied that he was not afraid of it, for he believed she was really penitent for her wrong-doings, but that if she did run away he would take no steps to get her back. He refused to apply for a *lettre de cachet* to confine his wife in a convent, because when Sophie heard he thought of doing so she threatened to commit suicide; he refused to give up his annual visit to his country house at Nans, nor would he promise when he went there to have iron bars put on Sophie's windows.

Mme. de Ruffey then tried another tack —she wrote to her daughter, telling her that Mirabeau was showing her letters to his friends and making fun of her; but naturally enough, Sophie did not believe this. During the weeks of waiting, before she was able to make her escape, Sophie, who knew that Mirabeau was penniless, tried to make some provision for the future: money they must have, so she sent packets of lace and jewellery to Mme. de Cabris to be sold —but was that all she sent? The evidence is not quite conclusive, but we fear that on the whole it seems to indicate that Sophie robbed her husband of a considerable sum in hard cash.

When the trial of Mirabeau for the abduction of Mme. de Monnier was being held in his absence, in 1777, some of the servants swore that Sophie had got up one night while her husband was asleep, abstracted his keys from his breeches pocket, opened his bureau and taken out a quantity

of money in gold—12,000 livres, the Marquis de Monnier asserted. True, Sophie was not there to controvert the charge; and there is good reason to believe that some of the witnesses at the trial were bribed or bullied. True also, Mirabeau, in the Memoir he addressed to his father, stated definitely that when he and Sophie eloped, their whole property consisted of 150 livres in money, about as much in jewellery, two coats and six shirts.

But in one of his letters to Boucher there is a passage which gives us pause: "I have never made a sacrifice for this ladylove," he writes, "who has sacrificed everything for me; if we were to reckon up I should owe her more than a thousand louis". This seems to make it clear that when she left her husband, Sophie brought a considerable sum of money with her, and whose can it have been but his? Still, she probably argued that so long as she carried off no more than the dowry he had received when he married her, she was really only taking what was morally if not legally her own.

At the time she was planning to fly with Mirabeau she was in such a state of mind that honour, duty, honesty, were as dust in the balance; she cared for nothing but Gabriel, as a few sentences from one of her letters show: "I cannot live apart from you; when I think we might have to wait for years my heart fails me. . . . The public, the universe is nothing to me, you are all for Sophie; she loves you, she adores you more every day."

Mme. de Ruffey was doing everything in her power to prevent her daughter running away; she had sent first her elder daughter and later her son to keep guard over her at Pontarlier.

She had even threatened that if Sophie remained obstinate, she would have her confined in the Saltpetrière, an asylum for female lunatics, but as long as Mirabeau was at large she could not feel safe. The Marquis de Ruffey set off to Paris to obtain a fresh order for Mirabeau's incarceration, and his wife despatched a police officer on the track of the fugitive.

So the chase began; and for nearly three months Mirabeau was continually on the move —at one time in Switzerland, at another in France, at another in Savoy—passing under various aliases, such as the Count de Beaumont, the Count de Montcherrey, the Chevalier de Vassan: constantly in danger of being captured, constantly giving his pursuers the slip.

When Sophie failed to join him at Verrières on the 2nd of June he feared to stay longer near Pontarlier, lest Saint Mauris might learn of his presence and have him arrested; so on the following day he set out for Geneva, which he reached on the 5th of June after having been nearly drowned while crossing the lake. A few days later he moved on to Thonon, where he had to undergo an interrogation by the Commandant, whom, however, he managed to bamboozle.

From Thonon he wrote in great perturbation to his sister, Mme. de Cabris, who was still with the inevitable de Briançon at Lyons. "My lot gets worse every moment. . . . I don't know what to resolve. . . . Oh, heaven! What will be the end of this? . . . Ah, Sophie! What a sacrifice I am making to love!"

Clearly, since Sophie had failed to join him on the 2nd of June, he had had time for reflection, and saw that if he fled abroad with her he would be a ruined man. Love drew him one way,

ambition another, and he found it hard to renounce either the one or the other. Louise's reply to this letter was to join her brother at Thonon. She understood better than Mirabeau did the parlous position he was in, for, as her father said, she had the better head of the two.

She had a real affection for Gabriel, and when he was removed from the Château d'If had sold her diamond earrings to pay the debts he had contracted there. Now she meant to save him from ruin if she could. But Mirabeau was not an easy person to help: he was headstrong, violent, self-willed; and Louise was well aware that to oppose his intention of eloping with Sophie was the surest way to make him persist in it. She therefore pretended to throw herself heart and soul into the scheme, and even went so far as to make Gabriel and Sophie believe that she and de Briançon intended to accompany them in their flight, and seek a refuge with them in England.

Her real intentions were very different; unknown to Mirabeau she was urging her mother to obtain a pardon for him through her relative, the Duke de Noailles, and her aim was to keep Mirabeau safe both from his pursuers and from Sophie until the pardon arrived. So far, she saw, he had done nothing which could be considered a grave offence: his debts, his scrap with de Mouans, his escapes first from Joux and then from Dijon were, in the eyes of the world, mere youthful indiscretions, very pardonable in a spirited young nobleman; nor as long as Sophie remained in her husband's house was any harm done there either; in the opinion of the day a husband who had been duped by his wife and her lover, as

the Marquis de Monnier had been, was an object not for pity but for ridicule.

If Mirabeau ran away with Sophie to a foreign country, that would be a different matter; he would have committed an unpardonable offence against the social conventions of the day—and would be a ruined man. So it was with the determination to prevent her brother from taking this fatal step, on which he seemed bent, that Mme. de Cabris came to Thonon, accompanied by de Briançon and her friend, Mlle. Jeanne de la Tour Boulieu, in whose house, the Château de la Balme, she hoped to find a safe hiding-place for Mirabeau.

Considering Gabriel's precarious position, one would have supposed that the little party would have taken every precaution to avoid attracting attention, and have made their way to the Château de la Balme as quickly as possible. Quite the contrary; with de Briançon disguised as a valet and Mlle. de la Tour as a lady's maid, they went to Geneva, and stayed there several days, enjoying themselves and going excursions. This act of folly nearly led to Mirabeau's capture, for the police officer sent in pursuit of him by Mme. de Ruffey thought he recognized him, but was dissuaded from arresting him by a fellow officer, who pointed out to him that he would be in an awkward position if he made a mistake and arrested the wrong man.

Perhaps because they suspected they were being watched, Mirabeau and his companions left Geneva on the 23rd of June, and after passing the night at Seyssel, reached the Château de la Balme the following day. Before a week had elapsed, however, they deemed it prudent to make another move, so Mirabeau set out by

river to go to Lyons with de Briançon. So far their relations had been entirely cordial, and Mirabeau always referred to Briançon as Pylades, implying that he regarded him as the best and staunchest of friends.

When they landed at Lyons they had a scuffle with a dozen watermen, which Mirabeau said was provoked by de Briançon. After discharging his pistol twice but without hitting anybody, de Briançon fled, leaving his friend to escape from the infuriated watermen as best he could. Mirabeau contrived to get off unhurt, and without hurting anybody, but the incident nearly led to a quarrel, for Mirabeau accused de Briançon of cowardice: and though they were reconciled for a time, Mirabeau never really forgave de Briançon for deserting him in a moment of danger.

They obtained a lodging in the place du Plâtre, where Mme. de Cabris and Mlle. de la Tour soon joined them; they took the greatest care not to be seen or recognized—the servant who brought their meals was not allowed to enter the room, and Mme. de Cabris' servant, Saint Jean, and a gendarme called de Curieux, kept watch outside the house.

At this time Mme. de Cabris had almost persuaded Mirabeau to go to Paris and seek an asylum with some influential friend of his mother, in hopes that a commission might be appointed to decide the quarrel between him and his father. But on the 12th of July they learnt that the police officer who was employed by the de Ruffeys was on his track. Accordingly, Mirabeau set out for Lorgues with de Briançon, who had a house there, and after being nearly captured on the way reached Lorgues on the 16th of July.

There de Briançon provided Mirabeau with a place of refuge in the house of his notary.

A few days after Mirabeau had fled from Lyons the two detectives, Muron and de Bruguières, whom his father had sent to track him down, reached that city. When he first heard of his son's escape from the Château de Dijon the Marquis was uncertain what course to pursue; some of his friends advised him to let the fool go to the devil his own way, but "finally" he wrote to his brother: "The cry of conscience and of honour, consulted in the silence of the night, won the battle in my heart".

Less than a fortnight after Mirabeau's flight from Dijon, his father obtained from the Minister, Amelot, an order to incarcerate his son at Mont Saint Michel, one of the strongest prisons in France, and forthwith engaged the inspector Muron, "a man unique in Europe for matters of this sort", to pursue and capture his son. Muron had, of course, to be paid for his service, and the Marquis, who had never been willing to spend money on freeing his son from debt, eventually found that he had to pay 30,000 livres to the detectives, who failed to catch him.

Muron and de Bruguières tracked Mirabeau to Geneva and thence to Thonon; but there they lost all trace of him, and for three days were wandering about trying to pick up the scent. They succeeded at last, and made their way first to Seysell and then to Lyons—which, they said, Mirabeau and his companions "had taken the most obscure means, accompanied by impenetrable ruses, to enter".

Here again they lost trace of their quarry for a time, but luck came to their assistance. Saint-Jean, Mme. de Cabris' lackey, had got

into some little trouble with the police, and the two detectives, having heard of it, went to the magistrate before whom he had to appear and asked leave to question him. Saint-Jean, taken unawares, told them all he knew, and Muron, seeing that "it would have spoiled all", if Saint-Jean had returned to his mistress and told her what had happened, had him imprisoned at Pierre-en-Seize, whence he would have no opportunity of communicating with anyone outside.

From Saint-Jean the detectives learned that Mirabeau had gone to Lorgues with Briançon, who intended to accompany him as far as Nice, whence he would take ship for Genoa, and spend a month there. The two detectives accordingly set off post haste to Nice, but finding no traces of their quarry there, decided to go to Lorgues. At Luc, about three leagues from Lorgues, they made the acquaintance of an advocate, M. Marsaut, to whom they confided the nature of their business. This man accompanied them to Lorgues, and introduced them to de Briançon.

Believing that Mirabeau had really sailed from Nice to Genoa, Muron and de Bruguières told de Briançon that they were merchants travelling to Genoa, in hopes that de Briançon would entrust them with a letter to carry to his friend. The ruse, however, failed, for though de Briançon treated them courteously they could get nothing out of him.

At the inn, however, they had, or believed that they had, better luck. There they learned that, a few days before, a mysterious stranger calling himself the Chevalier de Brie had left the town in company with de Briançon, intending, it was believed, to go to Saint Raphael and there embark for Italy. Several people in Lorgues

had recognized the mysterious stranger—he was Mirabeau!

Following up this clue, they hastened to Saint Raphael, but could learn no news of the fugitive there, nor at Cannes nor Grasse. Thinking Mirabeau might have fled to Savoy, they decided to go to Nice. When crossing the Var by the ferry, they learned from the ferrymen that a stranger exactly answering the description of Mirabeau had passed that way not long before: that he had no guide with him, and seemed desirous not to attract attention. A little later they got more confirmatory evidence; the stranger carried a little gold box with the portrait of a woman on it, and inquired about ships sailing from Nice to Italy.

At Nice they were at first unable to learn anything; but after careful inquiries they found out that a stranger had embarked at Villefranche, a small port near Nice, for England. This man answered the description they had of Mirabeau in all respects save one; he was wearing a red coat, not a green one.

How infuriated these two experienced sleuths would have been had they known that when they were at Lorgues, de Briançon had actually taken them past the house in which Mirabeau was concealed, and that Mirabeau had peeped at them through the venetian blind.

Yet it was no reflection on their cleverness that they had pursued the mysterious stranger, about whom they had heard at the inn. Some of Sophie's and Mirabeau's correspondence had been intercepted, and the de Ruffeys, with whom the detectives were in touch, knew of the much-debated scheme that the two lovers, accompanied by Mme. de Cabris and de Briançon, should escape

to England via Nice. They knew also that Sophie had abstracted a gold box, with her portrait on it, from her husband. Everything tended to show that the mysterious stranger was Mirabeau.

It was, however, the ex-gendarme who called himself the Chevalier Macon who had assisted Mirabeau when he escaped from the Château de Dijon; the de Ruffeys had obtained a *lettre de cachet* against him, so he had good reason for fleeing the country and for avoiding notice as much as possible as long as he was in France. His possession of the gold box is also explained; it had been entrusted to him by Mme. de Cabris to deliver to her brother, and he had forgotten to do so when he visited Mirabeau at Lorgues.

All this time, while trying to prevent her brother from carrying off Mme. de Monnier, Louise was deliberately deluding Sophie by promising her that she and de Briançon would flee with them to England, and seek "a retreat hidden from all the world". She had of course no intention of fulfilling the promise, but only made it, as she told her mother, "to inspire confidence"; it was the sort of plan which she saw would appeal to Sophie's romantic nature. But so eager was Sophie to put the plan in execution that Louise had to be constantly inventing excuses for postponement. At one time she pleaded that she could not go without her child, and she must have time to get her away from her father; at another time she said she could not start till after Mlle. de la Tour's marriage.

At last Sophie began to suspect that Louise might be playing her false, but was reassured by Louise's protests: "You say," wrote the wily Mme. de Cabris, "that it rests with me

to decide your lot ; is not that the same as saying you can be assured of happiness ? My reply is going to be that I consent to everything . . . we are all going to be happy together . . . love well your sister who embraces you tenderly and only desires the moment of reunion."

From Lorgues, Mirabeau wrote to Sophie daily—letters full of the most passionate devotion, and discussing plans for escaping abroad together. All the same he was not quite decided to take the fatal step, for when de Briançon left him to go to Lyons he promised solemnly not to leave Lorgues until de Briançon's return.

Meanwhile Muron and de Bruguières had returned to Lyons, and endeavoured both by arguments and threats to persuade Louise and de Briançon to reveal the secret of Mirabeau's hiding-place. At first they refused to do so ; but at last, either persuaded by the detectives' arguments or daunted by their threats, Louise gave way and told them. So off they set, sure that the prey they had hunted so unsuccessfully hitherto must now fall into their hands.

The next day de Briançon also left Lyons, with the object of warning Mirabeau to escape at once, and succeeded in reaching Lorgues before them. But the bird had flown : Mirabeau had fled from Lorgues. He had, however, left a letter behind him for de Briançon, telling him he had gone to join Sophie by way of Turin, the Alps and Switzerland. This letter de Briançon showed to the detectives, who believed that now nothing remained for them to do but to go to Pontarlier and await Mirabeau's arrival there.

Mirabeau's decision to carry off Mme. de Monnier seems to have been taken quite suddenly at the last, although he had been toying with

the idea for months. From some of Sophie's letters to him, written during the early days of August, it appears that at that time they contemplated postponing their flight until the middle of September, when Sophie and her husband would be staying at Nans, for they thought it would be easier for her to effect her escape from Nans than from Pontarlier. Mirabeau then was not finally committed to flight, for he had still more than a month in which to change his mind.

In an impassioned passage of the Memoir he addressed to his father from Vincennes he gives his reasons for finally deciding to fly with Mme. de Monnier—

> "She saw herself," he wrote, "without refuge and without hope. She knew a *lettre de cachet* had been asked for; terror got possession of her, and love abetted it; she demanded liberty or death. Yes, I call this unhappy woman to witness—who would be more capable of immolating herself for me than of justifying herself at my expense, she claimed my help and the performance of my oaths. . . . Ought I to have betrayed them? No, I ought not, after having brought her to the brink of the abyss I had no right to hurl her into it. . . . Dishonoured by the folly of her family, undone by the weakness of the man whose name she bore, she would have been the victim of my inconstancy, and have experienced only my desires and my perfidy. . . . Ah! the very idea struck me with horror. I ran, I flew; I crossed the Alps, and she came into Switzerland to give herself up to my honour and my good faith."

Probably when he wrote this, Mirabeau had brought himself to believe that it was true; his mind was steeped in the false sentimentalism of Rousseau, and he loved to picture himself a hero of romance; he had, moreover, a wonderful capacity for becoming the dupe of his own heroics. He believed, and probably was right in believing,

that had he deserted Sophie she would have committed suicide, and this belief and his own passion influenced his action.

All the same, the passage we have quoted contains one grave misstatement. At the time they fled, the Marquis de Monnier had not applied for a *lettre de cachet* against his wife and, what is more, she knew he had abandoned the idea of so doing. Nor is it true that an appeal from Sophie for immediate rescue fixed the time of their flight. This was determined by trouble of Mirabeau's own making. While at Lorgues he had written her a long letter in which, besides revealing his plans for their escape together, he told her that he and his own sister, Mme. de Cabris, had once been lovers. That the statement was false, there is every reason to believe, and it is not easy to see what reasons he can have had for inventing so foul a slander against one who had been his best friend, but so he did.

This letter never reached Sophie, and when he heard from her that she had received letters which he had written subsequently, but not that one, he surmised that it must have been intercepted, as indeed it had. Into whose hands it had fallen he could not tell, but one thing was certain—whoever had it would be sure to acquaint Mme. de Cabris with the slander on her which it contained.

Though Louise de Cabris was no model of domestic virtue—a shameless woman in some respects—she was certain to resent such a charge as this; and since she knew all her brother's plans, and was aware of Sophie's depredations, for she had herself sold jewellery for them at Geneva, Mirabeau felt he was utterly at her mercy. Knowing his sister's character, he was

aware that her vengeance was likely to be swift and merciless; to escape the overwhelming ruin it was in her power to bring upon him he saw that he must put himself out of her reach by fleeing abroad.

This, then, seems to have been the real motive of his precipitate flight from Lorgues; he had destroyed any chance of making a fresh start at home, and since ambition and the hope of a brilliant career had been the motives which had so far held him back from yielding to his passion for Sophie and carrying her off, and that he had by his own folly made it unsafe for himself to remain any longer in France, there was nothing to prevent him from calling Sophie to share his exile, knowing as he did that she was only waiting the word from him to fly into his arms.

Yet even to the last he seems to have hesitated to take the irretrievable step, for a letter which Sophie wrote to him on the 20th of August proves that she had received one from him full of harshness and reproaches. "Alas!" she cried, "would that you had left me to die with the certainty of your love and esteem. That death would have been gentle compared with what I am suffering. . . . Oh, Gabriel! how had you the courage to write all this to me, you who a moment before spoke of my sensibility?"

But if for a moment Mirabeau thought of picking a quarrel with his lady-love and leaving her behind him, while he sought a career in some foreign land, he soon changed his mind, for on the 23rd of August he contrived to send her a note informing her that he was awaiting her at Verrières. At nine o'clock next evening, having disguised herself in male attire, she got

out of her window while all the household was at prayers; an agent of Mirabeau's had brought a ladder by means of which she scaled the garden wall, and conducted her to a point on the road into Switzerland, where a man called Rosselet awaited her with a saddlehorse. In a few hours she too had crossed the border and joined her lover at Verrières.

When later, Mirabeau denied that he had abducted Mme. de Monnier, and asserted that she had joined him of her own free will—an assertion which she emphatically supported—they were both speaking the literal truth; he did not actually carry her off, she ran away and joined him. They remained at Verrières till the 15th of September, making no attempt to conceal their identity. Yet Muron and de Bruguières, who reached Pontarlier only a few days after Sophie's flight, made no attempt to follow and capture them.

Their inaction, in view of the strenuous efforts they had been making to overtake him for two months, is hard to understand; but a sinister explanation of it is suggested by a passage in a letter which the Marquis de Mirabeau wrote to his brother, the Bailli, on the 3rd of September—

> "I believe I am obliged to think uninterruptedly and continually of the means of confirming the expatriation of this wretched fool, and of ridding the family of him for ever. My friends told me that it was to my interest that this scoundrel should accomplish his fate by some decisive catastrophe, by some crime which would banish him for ever from the realm."

Had Mirabeau been captured at Verrières, and Mme. de Monnier taken back to her husband, it was likely enough that the Marquis de Monnier

might have been ready to forgive his wife, in which event there would have been no serious crime to lay at Mirabeau's door—nothing which would have made it impossible for him to live in France; it looks, therefore, as if Muron and de Bruguières were acting on instructions from "the Friend of Men" when they refrained from pursuing Mirabeau to Verrières, because the father wished to give his son every opportunity of involving himself in irretrievable disaster.

It is interesting to know what society at large thought of the Marquis de Mirabeau's own private life and conduct at a time when from conscientious motives he was paying detectives to hunt down and arrest his son. This we can learn from the pages of the *Memoires Secrets*, commonly known as Bachaumont's Memoirs—

> "No doubt it is not surprising to see, as often happens, two young married people joined only by ties of interest, by convention, views of fortune and ambition, become mutually disgusted with one another, accuse one another of deceiving, hate one another—in a word, reach the violent expedient of a judicial separation; but that a man of mature age, a philosopher, the head of a sect, who is always preaching virtue, honour, humanity, benignity that a deeply religious man, who always has Holy Scripture in his mouth, speaking only of Hell and Paradise, should force a wife after forty-three years of marriage to make the law courts resound with her complaints, to unveil the scandalous, extravagant, barbarous, tyrannical conduct of this grave personage —it was reserved for our time to present such a scene, and it is the lot of the Marquis de Mirabeau to be the hero of it."

Mirabeau, it seems, was not alone in regarding his father as a humbug and a hypocrite.

THE MARQUIS DE MIRABEAU

(*Photo, Giraudon*)

A few months later the *Memoires Secrets* gives a summary of a memoir which Mirabeau published against his father. The object of this piece, it says, "is to unmask yet better the hypocrisy of 'the Friend of Men', to bring to light his injustice, his harshness, his barbarity towards his son". The writer of the note shews his sympathy with Mirabeau by expressing his regret that the memoir setting forth the son's wrongs is less interestingly written than that which set forth his mother's.

The Marchioness' memoir, it should be mentioned, accuses her husband of the gravest misconduct, and if all the charges it contains were true—which is doubtful—would constitute a terrible indictment against his moral character.

CHAPTER VI

LIFE IN HOLLAND

M. de Montigny, Mirabeau's adopted son and biographer, says that he could an he would give a very circumstantial account of the manner in which the lovers passed their time at Verrières, of the route they pursued when they at last set out for Holland and of "all the circumstances of this act of madness and despair". But he adds: "such a narrative would be mingled with scandalous incidents, which we always reject".

This being so, we cannot of course reconstruct their itinerary or the scandalous incidents out of our inner consciousness, but we shall probably be doing Mirabeau's memory no grievous wrong if we surmise that he squandered their slender resources recklessly and gave poor Sophie cause for jealousy.

After a short stay at Rotterdam they reached Amsterdam on the 7th of October, where they lodged in the house of a tailor called Lequesne. Their original plan had been to go to England and, as after-events showed, they would have found a more secure refuge there than in Holland. But Mirabeau had his living to earn, and he believed that it would be easier for him to do so in Holland than in England. The one resource left him, when the money Sophie had filched from

her husband was spent, was his pen, and in Holland he hoped to find employment from the publishers.

The censorship in France was very strict and only books duly licensed by authority could be published there. In consequence, authors who knew that their works would not easily pass the censor had them printed in Holland and smuggled into France. Strangely enough, many books so printed had a large circulation in France, for the authorities who would never have licensed their publication were not equally strict in suppressing the circulation of contraband copies printed abroad. Mirabeau had already tried his hand at authorship—witness the *Essai sur le Despotisme*, which had been published in Switzerland, and got him into trouble.

He was soon to learn that the lot of a young author who tries to live by his pen is a hard one. The first publisher whom he approached was Rey, to whom he announced himself as the author of the *Essai sur le Despotisme*, to show he was not altogether a novice. "The book," he wrote, "may give you some idea of the manner and style of a man who is only twenty-seven. I know several languages; I have great facility, the will and the need to work. See, Sir, if you can employ me in some way. We will only talk of financial arrangements when you have seen what I can do."

There is something naively pathetic about this appeal; like many a young author before and since he seemed to think that publishers existed primarily to provide deserving young men of letters with a livelihood. In a postscript he suggested that if Rey thought a new edition

of the *Essai sur le Despotisme* would be a profitable speculation, he was prepared to improve and enlarge it. He did not give his name, and since in Holland he passed under the assumed one of Saint-Mathieu, it would of course have conveyed nothing to the publisher.

For a time Rey turned a deaf ear to his entreaties, and it was not until three months had elapsed that he gave him anything to do. After that he employed him chiefly in making translations of English books, and another publisher also found him work; so that Mirabeau, working from six in the morning till nine at night, was able to earn a louis a day. But, even so, he and Sophie did not find it easy to make ends meet, for living was dear in Holland.

Mirabeau appears in a more favourable light during his stay in Holland than at any other period of his life; for he was at least working hard to earn an honest living for himself and the unhappy young woman who had forsaken her husband, her home and her country to throw in her lot with his. Since they were neither of them troubled by any qualms of conscience about what they had done, they were happy together. To people such as they, whose minds were poisoned by the false sentimentalism of Rousseau, their conduct seemed not a breach of morality but a fine, a heroic thing.

True, Mirabeau regarded his elopement with Mme. de Monnier as an act of folly, because it ruined his career and drove him from his native land, but he also regarded it as an act he would have been ungrateful and cowardly not to commit. He looked upon himself as

one who had magnanimously sacrificed all for love.

And Sophie had no misgivings—from the moment she fell under Mirabeau's sway and gave herself to him it was "Gabriel or death" for her. In a letter she wrote him after they were parted she said: "Cruel lover, you said when you were leaving me, 'I have made you very unhappy'; but could you draw any comparison between what I am suffering and the happiness you made me enjoy? Could I not say to you as much and a thousand times more since it is I who wished it all?" In spite of everything, Sophie never wished what she had done undone; always thought of the months she spent in Holland as the happiest time of her life. "It is my principle," she told her mother, "to have only one lover, and not to blush either for him or for my love."

"We were so comfortable together," she said, "so content, so sure of one another, so happy! Alas, my Gabriel was not so much so as I; more attentive than his sweetheart to avoid and foresee what might afflict her, to console her to stop her tears." Again: "How many times have you torn yourself from my arms for work, for wearisome occupations; but nothing was wearisome to you when Sophie was concerned, my Gabriel! Ah, you were indeed the model of true lovers."

Mirabeau is not less enthusiastic: "My adorable companion," he wrote, "who, brought up and settled in opulence, was never so gay, so brave, so attentive, so even tempered, so tender, as in poverty, made my life charming."

Soon after Mirabeau's arrival in Holland

his mother attempted to persuade him to leave Sophie and seek a career in the army; had he done so, the Marquis de Monnier was still willing—nay, eager—to take his wife back; and Sophie once more in her husband's care, all danger of a criminal charge being brought against Mirabeau for abduction would have fallen to the ground.

But Mirabeau would none of it. "I had rather be a street porter here," he told his mother, "than fail in what I owe to her who has done everything for me." Sophie, ready as always to sacrifice herself for her lover's good, told her "dear Mamma", as she called the Marchioness de Mirabeau, that if need be she would consent to being confined in a convent, but to return to her husband was a humiliation she could not and ought not to suffer.

So the two lovers lived on happily together in fancied security, for Mirabeau had taken the precaution of registering their names at the Town Hall at Amsterdam, believing that having thus obtained a legal domicile there he would be protected against extradition by the privileges of the city.

During his stay in Holland, Mirabeau made many friends, especially among the Free Masons. His association with them stood him in good stead during his imprisonment at Vincennes, for both the Lieutenant of Police, Le Noir, and his chief clerk, Boucher, were Free Masons, and this no doubt served to influence them in his favour. On the other hand, the friendships he formed in Holland had one unpleasant if somewhat amusing result. The political writers and Free Masons with whom he became intimate were a class of people who stank in his father's

nostrils; and with his habitual graphic exaggeration the Marquis described them as "brigands".

He had, moreover, at the time that his son was fleeing from the Sleuth hounds, Muron and de Bruguières, heard from a merchant who had come across Mirabeau at Geneva, that "this brigand had said to him that after he had settled certain pressing matters of business he should go into Provence and cut the throats of father, daughter, and grandson, so that none of that race (*i.e.* the Marignanes) might survive". The Marquis, hoping to frighten de Marignane and so persuade him to share the expense of hunting Mirabeau down, communicated the merchant's words to him.

Years afterwards, when Emilie was seeking a judicial separation from her husband, one of her advocates made a deft use of what his father had said, to prove that Mirabeau robbed on the highway and was captain of a band of brigands! Nor did the matter end here, for the legend that Mirabeau had been captain of a robber band found its way into books written about him after his death. So do legends grow and spread.

While Mirabeau lived at Amsterdam in perfect security, as he believed, his enemies learned his whereabouts in a rather curious way. We have already seen that when he sought literary employment from Rey, the publisher, he told him that he was the author of *Essai sur le Despotisme.* Soon afterwards the publisher told him he had been informed that somebody else was the author. Mirabeau, who was indignant at this, wrote off forthwith to Fauche, the Neufchatel publisher, who had published

the original edition of the book, asking him to send a certificate that he, the Count de Mirabeau, was its author and no other. Fauche did as he was asked; he also did something that he was not asked—he informed the Marquis de Monnier where Mirabeau and Sophie were.

The Marquis de Monnier promptly sent a confidential servant to Sophie, imploring her to return to him. When Sophie turned a deaf ear to his entreaties, her husband, egged on by his daughter, Mme. de Valdahon, with whom he was now reconciled, brought a charge of abduction and seduction against Mirabeau, and of adultery against Sophie. This was no laughing matter, for although the accused were out of the country, and received no official citation to attend the trial, the trial went on quite comfortably without them. The Marquis was himself a member of the legal profession, and the judges who composed the court were all his friends. It was within their competence to convict the accused in their absence, if they considered the evidence against them adequate.

It is not very surprising then that the injured husband got a verdict, and that both the accused were found guilty. Mirabeau was condemned to be beheaded, and Sophie to be confined for life in a reformatory where she was to be shaved and branded as common prostitutes were. She was deprived of all her property and civil rights, and she and Mirabeau were both ordered to pay certain fines. But it is one thing to condemn a man in his absence and another to carry out the sentence you have passed upon him. The law in eighteenth century France, however, was equal even to this emergency, so the court

ordered Mirabeau to be executed in effigy—and this was actually done. He was not thereby, of course, injured in life or limb, but he was deprived of his civil rights and made an outlaw.

The severity of the sentence, no doubt, strikes us as extreme, but we must remember that Mirabeau and Sophie had been guilty of a grievous crime—they had violated the conventions of their own class. The laws against adultery were very severe, but rarely enforced. Now and again a cross-grained husband would punish an erring wife by shutting her up in a convent, or avenge his dishonour by calling out his wife's lover; but, generally speaking, the sin was condoned so long as no open scandal was caused. So cynically easy-going was the society of the day that it took a good deal to cause a scandal. But by fleeing abroad with Sophie, Mirabeau had succeeded in causing one, and it was for this they had to suffer.

Possibly, had the court at Pontarlier had Mirabeau and Sophie in its power and been in a position to execute the sentence it passed, that sentence would have been less severe, for it is noteworthy that the court took no steps to secure their persons. The sentence, then, may be regarded as being rather something of the nature of a demonstration, intended to show that the court considered the action of the accused as deserving the severest reprobation.

Mirabeau always contended that the sentence passed upon him was unjust—first because he was tried and convicted unheard, secondly because it was manifestly absurd to say he had abducted Mme. de Monnier. He did not go to seek her

—he was not even in France; it was she who ran away from her husband and came to seek him in a foreign land. In these circumstances, he asked, how could he, as a gentleman, send her back home, especially when she had threatened to commit suicide if she had to remain with her husband?

On the whole, there is more truth than falsehood in this view of the matter. Sophie was certainly the more eager of the two for flight, and although Mirabeau was undoubtedly an accessory to her escape, it is true that she went to him, not he to her. Nor was Mirabeau meanly shifting the blame on to her by so arguing—she was ready, nay eager, to allow that she fled of her own free will, for, while from a legal point of view this admission made her position no worse, it would serve to prove that Mirabeau's action, however rash or inconsiderate, was not criminal, that he was not technically guilty of abduction.

Mirabeau, though warned of the danger he was in, believed that the Government of Holland would never consent to his extradition, so did not escape to England, where he would have been absolutely safe, although he had plenty of time to do so. He was happy in Amsterdam; he had friends there, and was beginning to gain a reputation as a writer, his *Advice to the Hessians and other Peoples of Germany sold by their Princes to England* having attracted a good deal of attention.

But Sophie's parents were determined to get their daughter away from Mirabeau, and some weeks before the court at Pontarlier had passed sentence on the fugitives were taking steps to have her arrested and brought back

to France, and without any difficulty persuaded the Marquis de Mirabeau to make common cause with them and have his son also captured. For this purpose they employed de Bruguières, one of the detectives who had chased Mirabeau in the summer of 1776. The Minister, the Count de Vergennes, instructed the Duke de la Vauguyon, the French ambassador in Holland, "to assist M. de Bruguières with his advice to direct his conduct in the steps to be taken for fulfilling his commission and to take measures for obtaining permission to extradite".

De Bruguières was successful this time, and, four days after their condemnation at Pontarlier, Mirabeau and Sophie were arrested in Amsterdam. Mirabeau was not caught napping; for more than a fortnight before his arrest he had met and recognized de Bruguières at an inn. Two French gentlemen, who were on their way to America to fight, as volunteers for the rebels, happened to be staying at the same inn, and when Mirabeau informed them who de Bruguières was, they began to make remarks about him, in a manner which he resented; a quarrel ensued, and finally de Bruguières had to quit the inn.

A few days after this incident, Mirabeau wrote to his mother saying: "M. de Bruguières, chased from two or three inns is still here and, they tell me, commissioned to carry off Sophie." This makes it abundantly clear that Mirabeau knew the danger which threatened him and had ample time to escape from Amsterdam; that he made no attempt to do so, until it was too late, shows that he was convinced the Dutch Government would not consent to his extradition.

The account of their arrest will best be given in Mirabeau's own words :

> "The government demanded us back, and I was forewarned of it. The very day on which I was arrested, at three different times people in authority had me warned that I should be arrested *on the morrow*. Fatal mistake. I must not attribute treason to them. Their hand was forced in a moment. The French Consul came to me to offer me money, a passport—in a word, absolute liberty—if I were willing to restore Mme. de Monnier. . . . That very night we were to disappear ; this heroine of love, courage and goodness, was calm and collected ; but she was unwilling to start before me.
>
> "Another minute she would have been saved : I was already out of the house ; a friend was coming to conduct her by another route, for we dared not show ourselves together. . . . I learned that Sophie had been arrested ! I did not hesitate a moment what line I should take ; both my wishes and principles demanded I should be happy or unhappy with her : I gave myself up to the man who had orders to bring me back *dead or alive.*"

As usual, Mirabeau exaggerates and heightens the lights and shadows. De Bruguières had no instructions to bring Mirabeau back dead or alive ; he could not have had, for the Dutch Government, though it sanctioned Mirabeau's extradition, would certainly not have sanctioned his assassination. There is also reason to believe that Mirabeau had not actually left the house, but was only preparing to do so, when de Bruguières arrested him. Still, to go back and give himself up when he might have escaped, rather than desert Sophie, sounds more heroic ; and Mirabeau dearly loved a little limelight.

Sophie, it seems, thought of committing suicide, but Mirabeau, who was aware of her

intention, informed de Bruguières of it, and between them they managed to prevent her, de Bruguières demanding of her the poison she carried upon her as the price of an interview with her lover. The sentence passed upon them by the court at Pontarlier was not the cause of Sophie and Mirabeau's arrest, for de Bruguières actually arrived in Holland a fortnight before the trial was over, furnished with *lettres de cachet* which their own rélatives had obtained.

That Sophie's parents, who were religious-minded people and deeply distressed by their wayward and erring daughter's conduct, should want to separate her from Mirabeau is intelligible enough; that for this purpose they should employ a *lettre de cachet* is also intelligible, for it was the readiest if not the only means of achieving their end. So far they might urge that they were acting in her interest, prompted only by kindly forethought for her true welfare.

But what are we to think of their intention of committing her to Saint Pélagie, the French equivalent for Bridewell? Granted that Sophie's conduct had been so reprehensible that it was natural for her parents to feel righteously indignant—natural for them to think she deserved punishment, even severe punishment at their hands—can this palliate their cruelty in deciding to send their own daughter, a woman nobly born and gently nurtured, to a house of correction for common prostitutes?

That the indignation and disgust we feel when we read of their intention is not due merely to twentieth century sentiment is shewn by the fact that the detective, de Bruguières himself, protested against it, and that the Duke

de la Vauguyon, the French ambassador in Holland, wrote to the Lieutenant of Police asking him not to submit Sophie to so cruel and humiliating a lot. "I cannot refrain," he said, "from appealing to your compassion about the terrible position of Mme. de Monnier."

In her letters to her daughter, Mme. de Ruffey often protests that she had a real affection for her and was actuated only by a desire for her good. Truly, French parents in the eighteenth century had a strange way of shewing their affection for their children.

The Marquis de Mirabeau's motives were no less admirable than those of Sophie's parents. He had for a time decided to leave his son to go his own way and to trouble himself no more about him; he had even refused an offer de Bruguières had made him to track his son down. But when he heard Mme. de Ruffey was employing the detective to arrest her daughter, he changed his mind, and decided to employ him to arrest his son also. His reasons for desiring his arrest are made plain in one of his own letters to his brother, which must be quoted, for it shews the rancour he felt against his son and the lengths he was willing to go to gratify it—

> "I should have wished, had it been possible, to hand over this rascal to the Dutch to send him to the Colonies, to Muscade, whence he would never come out in his lifetime, for people don't come out from there. If he got himself hanged it would be incognito: for after all we are all mortal; and after you and me, if he survives us, he still has sense enough not to be shut up in a mad house, and folly and wickedness enough to disgrace the name he bears."

That this is no exhibition of momentary spleen is shewn by the Marquis' statement that he had actually approached the Dutch Government on the matter, and received an unfavourable reply. Still, though he could not rid himself of his son by sending him to die in the East Indies, the Marquis, following the dictates of his conscience which he "sounded every day before God", decided to get him imprisoned for life. "My plan is firmly determined," he wrote; "it is that only the Government and I shall know where he is, and that at my death a sealed letter shall acquaint my deputy with it."

No one could say that Mirabeau was blameless—he had got heavily into debt, he had broken out of prison and he had run away with another man's wife; but the punishment his father proposed to inflict upon him was utterly out of proportion to the gravity of his offences. In the past it had been possible for the Marquis to say that he had imprisoned Gabriel to save him from the results of his own folly, and protect him from even graver consequences. He could not say so now, for Gabriel was perfectly safe in Holland so long as his father did not molest him, and from what graver consequences can imprisonment for life be reasonably supposed to protect a man?

The Marquis' real reasons for having Gabriel arrested and imprisoned at this time were vengeance and fear. His law-suit against his wife was dragging its slow length along, and he knew that Gabriel was now supporting his mother. The Marchioness had recently issued a memorial in support of her case, in which her husband's character was very roughly handled: this mem-

orial, the Marquis knew, or reasonably suspected, was Gabriel's work, although Gabriel subsequently protested (mendaciously, no doubt) that he had had but a small hand in it, and was not responsible for the many offensive statements it contained.

"The Friend of Men" could not bear the idea of being bested by his wife, and knew that if she won the lawsuit he would be financially a ruined man; it was, then, to rob her of so redoubtable an ally as his son might prove to be, and to punish Gabriel for having taken his mother's part, that he doomed him to life-long imprisonment.

It seems strange that such a man as the Marquis—a man of no mean intellect, the enemy of tyranny and injustice—could justify so inhuman a course to himself. That he could and did was due to the views he held of parental authority. He believed that a father had a natural right to absolute authority over his children, and was justified in using any means to enforce that authority. This peculiar opinion does not render his action a whit less cruel or inhuman, but it does enable us to understand how he came to believe that he had a right so to act.

But though the Marquis might justify himself in his own eyes, it is not surprising that Mirabeau regarded his father's treatment of him with resentment and abhorrence. Nor was Mirabeau alone in so regarding it; the King —and the Marquis was well aware of it—did not approve of life-long imprisonment for family reasons, and a good many people regarded the Marquis' treatment of his family as outrageous.

This is well illustrated by the following anec-

dote which " the Friend of Men " himself narrated to his brother—

One day, about a year later, he met a man called Monpezat, who asked him if his lawsuit with his wife was concluded.

" I have won it," he answered.

" And where is she ? "

" In a convent."

" And your son, where is he ? "

" In a convent."

" And your daughter, the one who lives in Provence ? "

" In a convent."

" Have you, then, undertaken to populate the convents ? "

" Yes, sir ; and had you been my son you would have been in one long since."

The Marquis considered that he had set Monpezat down very prettily, and merely as a question of repartee he had perhaps the best of it. He does not seem to have understood that Monpezat was voicing the disapproval which French society felt of his treatment of his family.

Another proof that everyone did not see things as the Marquis did is afforded by the action of the Duke de la Vauguyon, the French ambassador in Holland, who visited Sophie and Mirabeau in prison at Amsterdam and showed a lively and sympathetic interest in them.

One might have expected that a detective who had had so much trouble in capturing a man, as de Bruguières had had in capturing Mirabeau, would not have been disposed to treat him, when taken, with great leniency : but de Bruguières was not proof against that strange

fascination which Mirabeau knew so well how to exercise over nearly everyone with whom he came in contact; and before they reached Paris he had become the devoted friend of his captives.

CHAPTER VII

THE PRISONER (I)

Before the two prisoners could be removed from Holland there were various formalities to be gone through, and their debts, which amounted to 9,000 livres, had to be paid. Since they had but little money the Duke de la Vauguyon satisfied their creditors out of his own pocket, and on the 28th of May, de Bruguières, escorted by Dutch officials as far as the frontier, set out with his two captives.

During the journey, de Bruguières treated them with all the consideration in his power. Still, the detective had to carry out instructions, and, when they reached Paris, he took from them their money, jewellery and other personal effects, which he deposited in the police bureau.

The first night they spent at de Bruguières' house, but on the morrow, the 7th of June, they had to separate and go each to the place of detention allotted them. The heat was excessive, and Mirabeau was suffering from fever. As he bade Sophie farewell he had an attack of hæmorrhage, and the carriage in which she sat was filled with his blood.

"I have made you very unhappy," were his parting words to her. So they separated, not to meet again for nearly four years, and Mirabeau was carried off to the dungeon of Vincennes.

Here he was to undergo imprisonment of a different kind from any he had experienced before. At the Isle of Rhê, at the Château d'If and at the Château de Joux, he had not been deprived of the ordinary comforts and conveniences of life, nor of the society of his fellow beings, for the governors to whose charge he was committed had treated him more as a friend than a prisoner. But at Vincennes his father had condemned him to solitary confinement under conditions which deprived him of everything which could make life tolerable. Hard as his life was during the three years and a half he remained a prisoner there, it would have been infinitely harder had not Le Noir, the Lieutenant of Police, taken an interest in him.

Since much of what we know about Mirabeau's life during his imprisonment is derived from the *Lettres originales de Mirabeau, écrites du Donjon de Vincennes*, it will be necessary to give some account of this famous correspondence.

It was first published by Manuel in 1792, when he became Procurer of the Commune. Most of the letters and documents it contained he found in the police archives. Unfortunately Manuel's editing, if editing it can be called, was extremely careless, for sometimes it is obvious that the letters are wrongly dated. Sometimes what is given as one letter is made up of portions of letters written at different times. As a historical document, therefore, it has to be used with caution; but with all its faults it produced the impression that Mirabeau had written some of the most wonderful love-letters in the world, and that he and Sophie were a second Abelard and Hêloise, true, long-parted lovers as devoted and as unfortunate as they.

But the facts are not quite so romantic as they seem; granted that Sophie was devoted heart and soul to Mirabeau, and that he loved her as well as so fickle and tempestuous a man was capable of loving any woman, still, the letters are not what at first they appear—sincere and heartfelt love-letters, but an elaborate piece of make-believe.

Almost from the beginning of his imprisonment, Mirabeau obtained leave of Le Noir to write to Sophie from time to time and to receive letters from her. But this correspondence was subject to certain conditions, and was carefully supervised; the letters had to be sent at first to Le Noir, and later to Boucher, who read them before forwarding them to their destinations. Nor was this all; after Mirabeau had read Sophie's letter or she his, the letter had to be returned to the police bureau, where it was filed—which accounts for Manuel finding the correspondence in the police archives.

Now, I defy anyone to write a perfectly frank, sincere, natural love-letter when he knows all the time that a third person is going to read it. If a man is aware that a police official—however kindly disposed and friendly that police official may be—will read his letters, he cannot express himself as he would if he were writing for the eyes of his beloved and hers alone to read.

But there is another reason besides this which makes these letters insincere. This officially recognized correspondence, as we may call it, was used by Mirabeau and Sophie as a blind to prevent the police suspecting the secret correspondence which they contrived to carry on all the time. The longer the letters they wrote, for Le Noir or Boucher to read, the more eagerly

they received them, the more bitterly they complained if the interval between the receipt of one letter and the next was rather longer than usual; in fact, the more store they set by the letters the police transmitted for them, the less likely was their secret correspondence, in which they expressed themselves frankly and without restraint, to be discovered.

It is a little disconcerting to an unsuspicious reader, who takes these letters to be genuine love-letters, to learn that an impassioned passage beginning, "Listen, my sweetheart, I am going to pour out my heart to thee", is a passage copied word for word from an article in a newspaper: but so it is.

But once on our guard, we begin to suspect the sincerity of much that Mirabeau writes in these letters. Take such a passage as the following—

> "I should wish at this moment, I should always have wished, to be reduced to the obscurest condition, utterly denuded of fortune, obliged to till the soil, to snatch a subsistence from it, to see myself yours, wholly yours by indissoluble ties. Sure that Sophie would be happy with me in a hovel, I should deem myself the richest, the most fortunate of men. When I returned under my humble thatch I should find tranquillity and tenderness. I should cover my wife and the child she carried at her breast with caresses. No! happiness is found only in love, wealth only in the presence of Sophie."

This has not the tone of a genuine love-letter. It is literature written by a disciple of Rousseau, carefully initiating his master's sentimental naturalism. When Mirabeau wrote this his chief object was to show Boucher or Le Noir what a devoted lover, what a splendid disinterested man he was. That he had true and deep affection for Sophie is certain; but he proved it, not by the theatrical

rhapsodies of these letters, but by his real distress for her sufferings, his solicitude for her welfare, and his determination not to accept his own release on terms which involved abandoning her to her fate.

Besides the letters to Sophie, Manuel's collection includes letters addressed to Le Noir, Boucher and others, which are of great value. It also contains a few letters to Sophie which it is almost impossible to believe can have been written with the knowledge that the police officials would read them. Such a one is the letter in which he suggests to Sophie that one of the sentries at Vincennes might be persuaded to convey letters for them, and that the turnkey, Berard, might be employed for the same purpose.

Here are two quotations from it—

> "A soldier would consent more willingly to this method than to any other, because if (a letter were) intercepted they could never know who had delivered it; but it is possible that it might be intercepted. There is nothing to do but put it under the stone seat beside the little hut in the garden where the prisoners walk. As there is a sentinel there all night, all the soldiers of the garrison pass there frequently in turn, and as I go there every day it (the letter) will not languish and I will put my reply there on the next day. Then he will tell you how soon he will be on guard at the dungeon again, so that I may only put my reply there on the day he will be able to take it, for fear of accidents."
>
> In the same letter he says: 'I will tell you explicitly the name and address of Berard's daughter. . . . I am confident a negotiation in this direction will succeed, for the good fellow worships his daughter and will see it is only a question of a love intrigue without any vestige of evasion'; and later: 'It is true Berard has more confidence in me than in any other—because he knows I am not a prisoner of State and I have hardly any doubt, he will even allow himself to be persuaded to transmit letters, provided he is never named'."

Surely it is inconceivable that Mirabeau would have written thus in a letter he knew Le Noir would read; to have done so would have been to defeat his own object.

From another letter it appears that he had persuaded Dr. Fontelliau to carry letters secretly for him. The Doctor, he tells Sophie, had said to him: "Your turnkey saw the other day that you had given me a note; I denied it, but he laughed and did not believe me. Take care, for it would be an unpardonable crime for you and me." The letter containing this passage cannot, we feel, have been part of the recognized correspondence.

Both the letters from which we have quoted must have been conveyed by some secret channel. But, if so, how did they come into Manuel's possession? In his prefatory discourse, Manuel states that many of the letters were lent or sold to him by the friends of "Gabriel and Sophie", and since there is nothing in the tone or style of any of the letters to suggest that they are forgeries, it seems that Manuel must by some means or other have obtained a few of the letters that the lovers sent one another surreptitiously.

Montingy's assertion that some of the letters printed by Manuel are "wholly unauthentic" is not borne out by the facts. Manuel printed only one of Sophie's letters to Mirabeau, and the others which she wrote with the consent of the police have been lost. But this is of no great consequence, since the letters which she contrived to send to him secretly have been preserved. On the other hand, nearly the whole of Mirabeau's part of the secret correspondence has perished, for Montigny deliberately destroyed it, on account of the indecencies it contained.

How Mirabeau obtained all the paper he must have used is a mystery, for the prisoners were only allowed one sheet of note-paper at a time, and since he wrote letters to Sophie "at least four hours a day" the amount of paper he consumed must have been enormous.

Vincennes was an eastern suburb of Paris, and its Château a royal residence, though it had not been used as such since the beginning of the reign of Louis XV, but was inhabited by a number of people who for one reason or another had been granted a free lodging there. The dungeon to which Mirabeau was committed was used as a prison, not for criminals, but rather for men such as he, whom for political or family reasons it was desirable to keep under strict control.

The governor was the Marquis de Voyer, but as he did not live at the Château, and rarely visited it, the Lieutenant, de Rougemont, was practically governor. He was apparently the illegitimate son of the wife of a farmer-general, but had at different times passed under different names, and had no better claim to that of de Rougemont than to any of the others he had borne. He was a short, stout, red-faced, choleric man, who at the time of Mirabeau's imprisonment was nearer sixty than fifty. Although his salary was only about 3,000 livres a year he managed to make his post bring him in something like 40,000, by scandalous malpractices —if Mirabeau is to be trusted.

At first he treated both the inmates of the Château and the prisoners in the dungeon with consideration, but ere long began to assert his authority in a manner displeasing to both. He closed the large garden which the inmates of the

Château had been accustomed to use as a pleasure ground, and kept it for himself. He put up sloping shutters outside the windows of the cells of the dungeon to prevent the inhabitants of the Château and the occupants of the cells from seeing one another. In consequence there was ill-will between him and those under his charge.

When Mirabeau entered the dungeon of Vincennes it seemed as if he were entering a living grave. All correspondence with the outer world was forbidden: no one but the authorities and his father knew where he was, and for ought he knew he might never leave his prison alive, though the kindly de Bruguières tried to reassure Sophie by telling her his imprisonment might only last for a year. The room in which he was confined was ten feet square, furnished only with a bed, two chairs and a table; from the window, which was high up, he could see nothing but a peep of the sky.

He had few clothes save those in which he stood up, and as these were light summer ones, and he did not receive his trunks for nearly a year, he suffered cruelly when the cold weather came. He had neither books nor papers; nothing to occupy his time or divert his thoughts. Even the turnkeys were forbidden to hold conversation with the prisoners. True, he was allowed one volume at a time out of the prison library, but what a library it was for such a man as he! The books were mostly theological ones, and no books but those officially licensed were admitted to it; consequently it contained neither foreign books nor French books printed abroad.

His clothes soon began to wear out, and he could truly say: "I have neither breeches nor shoes nor stockings nor coat. My cloth breeches

are in pieces, my cotton ones badly want washing. I have only one pair of stockings of which the feet are not in holes. My cloth coat is in tatters; the other dirtier than a dishclout." Sick in body, deprived of all the comforts and conveniences of life, denied human intercourse, with no occupation to fill the weary hours and no ray of hope to light the future, it is marvellous that his spirit was not broken by the weight of his misfortunes. And had his father's wishes been carried out to the letter perhaps it would have been.

From the very first Mirabeau laid schemes for obtaining his release, not by a direct appeal to his father, whose rancour was, he believed, enflamed by his mistress, Mme. de Pailly, but by persuading those in authority to espouse his cause against his father. Quite early in his imprisonment he was feeding himself with hopes that he might be released if he volunteered to go to America, as other French noblemen were doing, and serve with the rebel forces against the English.

Finding that the Commandant, de Rougemont, was a great stickler for keeping rules and not disposed to be friendly, Mirabeau turned to the more kindly and sympathetic Le Noir and wrote him a number of letters in which he demonstrated how unjustly he had been treated—

> "If," he writes, "I have been detained on a false charge, I cannot refute it. It is on the accusations of a father whom resentment makes my prosecutor, who alone has been heard, that I have been judged and condemned. Those who are interested in me know not where I am nor how to defend me. I must then wait and groan till a happy caprice of my influential persecutor breaks my chains, or till I perish beneath the weight of them if he is inflexible."

He goes on to point out that, though he is treated with all the rigour due to a prisoner of State, his offence is a purely private one, and far less serious than many which the King pardons every day. That after all it is not such a very astonishing thing for a wife to run away from a septuagenarian husband; and that the scandal which Mme. de Monnier's flight had caused was due, not to the flight itself, but to the senseless and vindictive way in which her relatives had behaved about it. He then proceeds very artfully to put his case before Le Noir.

He had not abducted Mme. de Monnier; it is absurd to suggest that he did, since he was in Switzerland alone and she ran away by herself. He had only done what any honourable man would have done when she joined him; helped her and saved her from being locked up by her relatives. As for himself, he was the victim of family quarrels. Mme. de Pailly influenced his father against him; his sister, Mme. du Saillant, and her husband, were intriguing to get the Marchioness de Mirabeau to settle all her property on them; that his father's plea that, were he at liberty, he would try to abduct Mme. de Monnier again, was absurd; since now that she was a prisoner by the King's order, such an action would constitute treason, and by it he would forfeit all hope of ever enjoying his fortune and living in his own country. If only the King could be persuaded to grant him his release, he would agree to any conditions, provided Mme. de Monnier's relatives would grant her an "honourable liberty".

What reply, if any, Le Noir made to this letter we do not know, but two or three weeks later Mirabeau wrote to him again. In this

letter he points out that his association with Mme. de Monnier was not in the first instance of his own seeking—

> "I did not ask," he cries, "to be sent to Pontarlier; my destiny, or rather the ingenious cruelty of my father drove me thither. There I found a being who spoke to my heart; alas! how easily one is touched when one is unfortunate. A woman worthy of respect for every kind of virtue . . . took too lively an interest in my lot. Incensed by my misfortune which her relatives aggravated, persecuted with the most intolerable tyranny, seduced by love, she renounced her wealth, her peace of mind, even her reputation, to follow me to a country where I sought liberty; and I had the weakness to consent to it. If it is a crime, I am horribly punished for it; since I have involved in my fall the incomparable lover who had sacrificed everything for me."

How cleverly Mirabeau puts it, how ingeniously he represents Sophie as having run away with him, not he with her; and he could safely do so, for he knew Le Noir could not possibly be aware of the way in which her flight had been concerted between them. Thus to shift the blame on to Sophie's shoulders does not at first sight seem very chivalrous, but it must be remembered that not only was Sophie herself well aware that she had fled with him willingly, but had actually suggested that she should provide him with proofs that she had done so.

This is made plain by a letter she wrote on the 14th of July, 1777; in it she says: "I would also write you some letters which would be dated last summer (*i.e.* 1776), in which I will tell you that I absolutely wish to elope: and everything which can serve to clear you of abduction. If you think this would be useful to you, don't refuse out of delicacy." For Sophie to do as she

proposed would make things no worse for her, while by affording Mirabeau proofs that she eloped willingly she would clear him of the criminal charge of abduction. Still, her offer to manufacture evidence in this way is but one more proof of her unselfish devotion.

His flight with Mme. de Monnier, Mirabeau hinted, was not his father's real reason for imprisoning him. No ! his attachment to his mother, his determination to escape after eighteen months' unjust imprisonment, his resentment at his father's setting his wife against him ; above all, the fact that the family property was entailed on him —these were the real motives of the Marquis.

These letters did not bring Mirabeau any nearer his release, but they did win for him Le Noir's sympathy, and the Lieutenant of Police took trouble to alleviate the prisoner's lot in various ways, and throughout his imprisonment proved a true friend to him.

Besides the hardships of his daily life and the uncertainty of his own future, Mirabeau had other things to harass his mind—the sufferings of Sophie and the doubtful destiny of the child they were expecting.

True, that thanks to the intervention of the Duke de la Vauguyon, Sophie had not been sent to Saint Pélagie, as her parents had originally intended, but to an establishment kept by a certain Mlle. Douay, under whose charge she remained at Paris for more than a year. But if her life there was neither as hard nor as degrading as it would have been at Saint Pélagie, the conditions of it were distressing enough, as we learn from her letters.

Her rooms were small ; there were bars on the windows and bolts on the outsides of the

doors. A footman was allowed to exercise a good deal of control over "the boarders", as we may call them; he would enter their rooms late at night and order them to go to bed if he thought they were staying up too late, and had even been heard threatening to strike them.

What Sophie describes as "the cream of the boarders" were the wife of an advocate, the wife and the mother of a milliner; some of them were restaurant keepers, upholsterers, sempstresses and suchlike, two of whom had actually been confined at Sainte Pélagie, and all of whom were women of light character. These were the sane members of the household—there were also a number of others who were either insane or feeble-minded.

Not long after Sophie's arrival, Mlle. Douay bought a château in Nouvelle France, near Montmartre, where her boarders were more comfortably lodged; for, the house being a large one, the sane inmates were less annoyed by the screams and shouts of the insane, and each boarder was able to have a room to herself, instead of having to share one with three, or sometimes as many as six others—at least, so Sophie said.

At the end of August, Mirabeau again addressed a letter to Le Noir, thanking him for the permission he had given him to write to his mother—a permission which, in view of the bitter animosity existing between the Marquis and his wife, was a large concession on Le Noir's part. In this letter Mirabeau puts several points which he thinks will tell in his favour.

His father, he says, owes the title of "Friend of Men" to no one's generosity but his own,

" for it is not in the bosom of his family that proofs of his tenderness should be sought, and a man who calls himself tender and compassionate, *the legislator of kings*, the benefactor of all mankind, and who is the oppressor of his wife and children, ought to be heard with some precaution ".

He had not wished to take sides in his parents' quarrel, and had they but listened to him, the scandal it caused to the amusement of all Paris would have been avoided. The memorial on behalf of his mother published under his name was not written by him. In a postscript he asks to be allowed a visit from de Bruguières—probably because he hoped he would be the bearer of a private letter from Sophie, but naturally he gives Le Noir no hint of this.

In the same letter, which is dated 13th September, he complains of his bad health. " I have lost my sleep again," he writes, " which, to tell the truth, I have never recovered. I suffer in my chest, and above all I have terrible headaches. My eye begins to swell again." He even thinks of suicide—" the one asylum where despotism cannot reach him ". Only the thought of Sophie and her unalterable fidelity holds him back. That Mirabeau was only toying with the idea of suicide, and not seriously contemplating it, is shown by the fact that he was meditating an appeal to the Duke de Noailles, a relative of his mother, to intervene on his behalf and secure his release.

As the weeks passed by, and the hardships of his lot remained unrelieved, the iron entered into his soul, and his bitterness against his father increased. Writing to Le Noir he says : " The humiliation, the silence, the agonies of prison

when the unhappy man is left nothing of his life but his breath, is a punishment more severe than a death sentence. No correspondence, no society, nothing to enlighten him about his lot, no distraction in the present, no knowledge of the future—what a direful mutilation of existence!"

Who can wonder that a son, condemned to such a lot by his father, should give vent to bitter recriminations; and the charges which Mirabeau brings against his father are in the main true, though he obviously writes with bias—

"The Marquis de Mirabeau," he tells Le Noir, "after a tempestuous youth, has marked his riper age by the following characteristics—he has persecuted one of his brothers in France and abroad with a virulence which made people think he found himself hard put to to pay him his lawful inheritance. He has *ruined* himself in creating a *political economy*. He has diminished the property of his children and that of his wife by two millions, while preaching against luxury and debts. He has obstinately insisted on founding a sect in Paris despite the disorder of his own finances, while he urged his fellow citizens to go away and live on their estates. Thrice he has treated his wife with the most shameful cruelty, while preaching morality. He has scandalously paraded his mistresses, while deploring the depravity of the age. The feeling and tender Friend of Men, whose soul is too lofty to stoop to ordinary affections, disdains his family and only loves the human race, has persecuted his wife and all his children.

"He has driven from his house and confined in a convent a wife, who has given him an income of 50,000 livres and eleven children. He has deprived her of her livelihood and broken the most definite promises; he has harassed her year in and out with *lettres de cachet*. He has had his mother-in-law and his eldest son debarred from the enjoyment of their incomes, because he loves trusteeships, and that he is an excellent administrator may be proved by his balance sheet. He

has forced his eldest daughter to become a nun; he has persecuted his sons and refused them the slightest pecuniary help. He has wished to extend his tyranny to one of his married daughters whose husband did not complain of her: in fact, he has treated in the same manner all his children save one, who has found favour in his sight, because she has made herself the obliging friend of his mistress, and her crafty husband has become passionately interested in economic windmills."

No one can read this without recognizing the rhetoric of a special pleader—and much can be said in mitigation of some of the charges Mirabeau brings against his father. The statement that the Marquis had treated his wife with shameful cruelty (a statement couched in language which decency has compelled us to paraphrase) is supported by no evidence but Mirabeau's bare assertion; if the Marquis made his eldest daughter take the veil, it is fair to him to remember that she was a mental defective. If it be true that Mme. de Cabris' husband did not complain of her, it does not mean that he had not good cause to do so. That the Marquis got himself appointed trustee for his eldest son is a fact, that son's reckless extravagance practically forced him to take this step.

Still, when all deductions have been made, the indictment remains a formidable one and explains, if it does not wholly justify, the bitterness with which Mirabeau regarded his father at this time.

In the letter which he addressed to the Duke de Noailles a few weeks later he is much more guarded. If he still represents his father as persecuting him, he suggests that people who wished to ruin him had influenced the Marquis against him. His greatest crimes, he says, are

that he loved his mother, had contracted some debts, and made fun of his father's philosophic notions.

This letter probably never reached the Duke, or, if it did, it produced no result.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRISONER (II)

On the 7th of January, 1778, Sophie's child was born—not a son, as she had fondly hoped, but a daughter.

Although Mirabeau asserted that it was against his principles to saddle one man with another man's offspring, he advised Sophie to have the child registered in the name of de Monnier. His reason for doing so was not wholly discreditable, for it was the child's welfare which he was considering. He hoped that, should he die and leave the child without a protector, the Marquis de Monnier and his daughter would prefer to make some provision for her rather than take the trouble of disputing her legitimacy.

So the baby was duly registered: "Sophie Gabrielle, daughter of Marie-Thérèse Sophie Richard de Ruffey, wife of my lord Claude-François, Marquis de Monnier." Curiously enough, although the child was baptized Sophie Gabrielle, her mother and Mirabeau always refer to her in their letters as Gabrielle Sophie, and from the time of her birth until her death there is frequent mention of her in their correspondence.

Sophie assured Mirabeau that she was the very image of her father, to which he replied: "My daughter is like me, do you say? You have made her a sorry present. But let her have your soul, ah! then she will be rich indeed,

nature will have well compensated her for the disadvantages of her birth." Perhaps to comfort Sophie he assured her that he had all along hoped for a daughter, because " she would be the image of her mother ", while a son would have inherited his father's faults. Some months later, when he received a portrait of his daughter, he wrote : " She is pretty, too pretty surely to resemble me."

Sometimes he gives proof of the interest he took in the little daughter he never saw in a manner which makes the reader inclined to smile ; for instance, when he gives Sophie instructions how to deal with the troubles caused by teething, or insists again and again on the necessity of having the child inoculated for small-pox. At another time he asked that half his scanty allowance might be devoted to the maintenance of his child, for he had learned that Sophie was earning money to pay for its keep by doing needlework.

This was after the child had been taken from her, for when she was removed from Paris to a convent at Gien the child was put out to nurse in the house of a mason at La Barre, and Mlle. Douay was supposed to visit her and see that she was properly cared for—a duty which, in Sophie's opinion, at any rate, she did not discharge in a satisfactory manner.

In March, 1778, Le Noir, who despite the good will he always shewed towards the unhappy prisoner perhaps found the constant claims Mirabeau made on his time and attention something of a burden, put his Chief Clerk, Boucher, in charge of him.

Boucher, who like his chief was a Free Mason, was a true friend to Mirabeau, and did everything

in his power to ameliorate his lot. Not only did he secure him a supply of books and writing materials, but arranged for the publication of the works which Mirabeau wrote while in prison. There were of course things he could not do—for instance, alter the general conditions of Mirabeau's life in prison, for he could not in such a matter overrule the authority of the Commandant. But he did his utmost, and well deserved the nickname which Mirabeau bestowed upon him—"The Good Angel".

Mirabeau's health continued bad, and his eyes in particular caused him great trouble, so that it is no wonder he left no stone unturned to secure his release. In many small ways Le Noir and Boucher humoured him—they allowed his bust which was contained in his luggage to be sent to Sophie—they allowed him to receive busts of her and her child.

A minor vexation was that he received no news of his son, and he complained to Le Noir that to receive any news he must apply to his wife—"a woman whom I despise, whom I should hate if I knew how to hate; who, owing me everything, is one of my bitterest enemies". Despite his dislike of holding any communication with his wife he addressed a letter to her in which he complained that although she had promised some months before to keep him exactly informed of his son's progress, she had during that period sent him no news of the child; such conduct is, he says, simply inhuman. The whole letter is very bitter—the letter of a man who feels that he is being cruelly treated.

The spring of 1778 was a specially trying time to Mirabeau; for two months he received no news of Sophie, probably because they had been

indiscreet in some of the things they had said in the former letters which had passed through Boucher's hands, and were unable for the moment to find a suitable emissary to carry secret missives for them. The hope he had been nourishing that he might be released to serve in the army came to nothing. The letters he wrote to the King and the ministers Amelot and Maurepas produced no result.

It is not strange then that such a man as Mirabeau, who hoped for no heaven and feared no hell, should have thought of suicide. For twelve long months he had undergone what was practically solitary confinement; his food was bad and ill-cooked, his clothes were worn out and insufficient to keep out the winter's cold, he had endured sickness of body and anguish of mind, and, worst of all, there seemed no end to his sufferings; as long as his father lived—and that might be for many years—death appeared to be his only means of escape from prison.

That he seriously thought of taking his own life is shewn by the fact that he provided himself with poison; this he did by steeping copper coins in vinegar thus obtaining verdigris. Montigny thinks that it was at this time that he wrote the farewell letters to his parents, Sophie, his brother and others, which he entrusted to Boucher in a sealed packet to be opened only after the writer was dead. But this conjecture is undoubtedly wrong, for in his letter to his brother Mirabeau refers to the death of his son, who did not die till many months later.

What caused Mirabeau to refrain from committing suicide at this time we cannot tell; but, if for once it is permissible to attribute a disinterested and unselfish motive to him, we should

conjecture it was his love for Sophie and his concern for his baby daughter. He knew what an overwhelming blow his death would be to Sophie, for he could not have forgotten that when they were arrested in Holland, and she knew they were to be separated, she had wished to take her own life; and if he were to commit suicide and she were to follow his example, what would be the fate of his little daughter?

That Mirabeau so reasoned we cannot affirm, but, if he did, it would have been in keeping with what we know he felt about Sophie and her child. He was very despondent at the time, for the present and the future seemed equally black to him. "The career of ambition is shut against me," he cried; "my talents are spoiled, my health is destroyed, and I am in chains." It must have been some strong motive that nerved him to go on enduring.

While Mirabeau languished in prison, his wife found the life of a grass widow very much to her taste; without difficulty she obtained a "separation of goods" which rendered her complete mistress of her own property, and contemplated seeking a "separation of body", the equivalent of the English separation *a mensa et thoro*—a complete divorce, in fact, except that it did not permit the parties to re-marry.

She was moved to this by the reflections Mirabeau had made upon her in a letter to Malesherbes, which he included in a memorial he published while he was in Holland. In this letter he had said: "She who owes me everything—honour and life—can do nothing for me, because my father has forbidden her to. . . . Would that he could also forbid her to feel the pangs of remorse which ought to lacerate her."

Nobody who read this could doubt Mirabeau's meaning, and since Emilie knew that what he insinuated was true, she was probably even more incensed by it than she would have been had she known it to be false. For the time, however, her husband's relatives succeeded in dissuading her from taking steps to obtain a "separation of body".

It was a gay life she led, visiting the Châteaus of the neighbourhood of Aix, dancing, singing and acting. Her friend, the Count de Gallifet, had a theatre built specially for her at his Château at Tholonet, and even engaged professional actors to come and act with her. In every way he tried to rival the Count de Valbelle, of whose court of love at Tourves we have already heard. So at Tholonet Emilie found herself the queen of a gay circle which spent its days in a round of amusement, and came to be known as Madame du Tholonet. Gaiety, admiration, applause were the very breath of her life, and all these she enjoyed without stint at the Château de Tholonet.

On the face of it, of course, Mirabeau's flight with Mme. de Monnier gave her every right to cast him off and go her own way. In the eyes of the world she was the injured party, but the world did not know that Mirabeau had appealed to her to join him at Pontarlier, that they might go abroad together and start life afresh. Had she done as he asked, instead of coldly replying that it was not convenient, things might have been very different; her refusal to rejoin her husband had served to throw him into the arms of Mme. de Monnier.

Le Noir had sent him a portrait of his child, a favour for which he thanked him warmly, and Boucher was seeing that he was supplied

with books and writing materials; he was even prepared to allow the manuscript of the translation of *Tibullus* Mirabeau was making to be sent to Sophie. Mirabeau's literary labours not only served to keep his mind and his time occupied, they helped to supplement the miserably inadequate allowance his father made for his maintenance.

But if Boucher was always helpful, de Rougemont sometimes made difficulties; for instance, when Mirabeau desired a box of mathematical instruments he was informed it was against the rules. Thereupon he appealed to Le Noir. "I promise," he said, "not to make a breach in walls fifteen feet thick nor in iron bars with a little pair of compasses."

On the 8th of October Mirabeau's little son, Victor, died—an event which was to have a greater influence on his future than he suspected at the time. He had not seen the child since he was about nine months old, and never professed any great affection for him. "We love in our child," he said, "the mother who gave it birth, and our special affection for the child is proportionate to this primitive sentiment. . . . It is very difficult, even impossible, that I should not love my daughter more than my son. However, this son of mine has not and cannot have done me any wrong. I believe he really is my son; I ought to love him, and I do love him. But every day, every instant, brings the image of my daughter before my mind, and I am forced to acknowledge to myself that the memory of my son is much less insistant."

No; the death of his five-year-old son was not a great blow to Mirabeau in itself, but he feared it might render his position even more

desperate than it was before. It might, he believed, confirm his wife in her desire to see him kept a life-long prisoner, for as long as he remained so her whole fortune would be at her own disposal after her parents died, whereas were he set free she could claim only 4,000 livres a year and household expenses. His father, he feared, might take the occasion of the child's death to persuade his mother not to make her eldest son her heir by offering her her liberty.

Mirabeau thought that, now he was childless, cupidity and self-interest would harden the hearts of his relatives even more against him. Little Victor had been the future heir both of the Mirabeaus and the Marignanes, and Gabriel, as his father, was necessarily to be reckoned with in the family plans—now that Victor was dead, his father could safely be left to rot in prison. It did not occur to Mirabeau that ultimately his son's death was to be the cause of his release.

During the latter part of 1778 Mirabeau's condition was truly pitiable; owing, no doubt, to the confined, unhealthy life he led, his health grew worse and worse. He was threatened with stone, his eyesight was failing, and he feared a cataract was forming in one of his eyes; he could see but ill during the day, and was almost totally blind during the evening. "I spend more than an hour a day," he tells Sophie, "trying to write with my eyes shut, so as still to be able to write to you with my own hand when I am blind—and I shall become so. I fold a piece of paper in as many little creases as I wish to make lines, and I follow each of these creases, pressing my finger at the end of each word to make a suitable separation."

An oculist was called in, who ordered Mirabeau

to work only by the light of a lamp with a reflector behind it, but gave his opinion that unless he could have a freer healthier life he would go blind.

In reporting the oculist's opinion to his father Mirabeau said: "What will you say? That I have won over an oculist whom I have seen for ten minutes in my life? that I have seduced the commandant who for eighteen months has constantly praised my conduct? that I deceive everybody, you only excepted in the universe? that I am a hypocrite, a scoundrel, a monster?" And Mirabeau was right; his father would not believe that he was really ill, and refused him even such alleviations as "are not refused to a lacquey at a well conducted hospital".

That towards the end of the year 1778 he believed he was going to die is clear from a letter he wrote to his mother on the 21st of November, commending his little daughter to her care. It is probable that at this time he wrote the farewell letters to Sophie, his parents, his brother, Boucher and Le Noir, which were to be opened only when he was dead.

In these letters, although there is frequent reference to his approaching end, there is no hint that he intended to commit suicide; and, as we have already seen, the state of his health at the time justified him in thinking he had not long to live. In the letter to Le Noir he writes: "Let us resign ourselves; let us bow the head under the inevitable yoke of necessity." Now this is not the tone we expect a man to adopt who is about to take his own life; it is rather that of a man who would fain live, but believes death is near at hand.

These letters show Mirabeau at his best;

despite their rather high-flown language, they exhibit a real sincerity of feeling, a real solicitude for the welfare of Sophie and her child. To his mother, his father, his brother, he pleads to have pity on his little daughter. "My desire," he writes to his brother, "is that my daughter should be free and in no way dependent, nor consecrated to a monastic life which I hate and despise. I am far from demanding that you should pinch yourself to give her a useless and dangerous opulence, and I think you can make her a sufficient allowance without straitening yourself."

In the letter to Sophie, which we give in full below, there is real tenderness of feeling, and it is hard to believe that even Mirabeau could have urged Sophie as he does to refrain from suicide and live for her child's sake, had he at the moment been contemplating self-destruction. He knew that in times of trouble and difficulty Sophie's thoughts always turned to suicide, and was far too shrewd a man not to be aware that, if she learned that he had perished by his own hand, his example would be likely to have more influence upon her than his precepts.

"To my Sophie,

It has arrived, the moment of an eternal separation—oh, my tender Sophie! The delusions of love have long deceived us, but nature does not lose its rights. The slow poison of sorrow has consumed your lover: he is going to die. . . . O too unfortunate half of myself! who will soften for you this terrible blow a hundred times more cruel than that which will strike me down in a few hours perhaps? for indeed I am leaving you, and it is a very bitter sorrow, but it will finish with my life. This heart where you still reign will beat no more, either for grief or love; and you, you will survive to weep long for your Gabriel. . . . Ah, Sophie! How

I pity you. I am far less unfortunate than you since I was not destined to survive you.

"But do you think to be even with me? No, Sophie, no! She exists, that dear child whom you have given me; she lives to soften the loss of me to you, to recompense you for it as much as you can be recompensed. She has you only—you only are her mother, you only are her father. You owe to her the love of both our hearts. Ah, my Sophie! how many duties remain for you to fulfil: and how many consolations you will reap in performing them.

"Dear Sophie! Oh, my well-beloved! Chosen of my heart, beware of outrageing love and nature by the crime of despair. Often in the delirious transports of your affection have you sworn not to survive me. . . . Were you a mother then, sweetheart? No, you were not, and should you consider yourself bound to-day by this rash and blameworthy oath you would be as cowardly a sweetheart as you would be an unnatural mother.

"Yes, my Sophie, I bequeath to my daughter all my rights which it is possible for her to inherit; I bequeath to her all your attentions, all your tenderness; and were I to distrust the courage of my sweetheart and her compliance with my ardent and last prayers, I should die despondent at having given life to a child for whom I can do nothing, and at having by my fault alone sacrificed both the mother and the daughter to my ill-fated love.

"Oh, Sophie, Sophie! would you wish that a passion so tender, so pure, so faithful, so true, should be at my last sigh a source of cruel repentance and ravening remorse? Live, my sweetheart, give me this proof of tenderness; live to clasp my daughter in your arms —to speak to her of her father, to tell her how much he has loved you, how much he loved her, how much he would have loved her. . . . Ah! if in the bosom of the earth to which I am going to return, I could preserve that celestial spark, that feeling and all-loving soul of which you will concentrate the forces and the energy, I should hope one day to reunite in my bosom my sweetheart and my child. . . . I know not, oh, my Sophie! I know not.

"I can hardly believe that as long as there exists

any morsel of my being my love will not survive. Whether it be illusion or reality, the soul of Gabriel and that of Sophie, and their incomparable tenderness, seem to be indestructible. This idea is consoling; it promises us a witness who judges our hearts, who knows if we have merited such barbarous treatment; who, more indulgent than men, will pardon our weaknesses, and purify emotions which do not wound virtue. . . . Oh! if in a resting-place of eternal happiness, sheltered from fanatics, slanderers and tyrants, we could be reunited for ever to love one another, and adore thee, God! Omnipotent God! give me back my sweetheart, pardon me as a reward for her virtues.

"Ah! if I have denied thy providence, it was that I might not be tempted to believe thee the accomplice of wicked men! thou knowest if I was in earnest; your feeble creature cannot have offended you. Could you be angry with him and punish him for the weakness of his understanding? Cast, cast at least a look of clemency on her whom my mistake has seduced; enlighten her, protect her, give her the strength to resist what the loss of me will prompt her to, to discover the truth, to shew it to my daughter, and to merit to be an object of thy pity. . . .

"Alas, my Sophie! this letter is a very long one, considering the moment at which you will have to read it. What more should I add? Should I go on to weaken your soul when I am conjuring you to show a bold front to misfortune? I distrust my own sensibility and I finish . . . I finish for ever. Ah! I think without ceasing, that he will die pronouncing your name, who cherishes you with the tenderest and most faithful love, who at no moment in his life, even in thought, has been untrue to the affection he had sworn to you, demands of your tenderness and, if he dare say so, of your gratitude, that you should live for your daughter, who is also mine.

GABRIEL."

The religious ideas expressed in this letter, the hope, if it be only a faint one, of reunion hereafter with those he loved, the cry to God for mercy, the prayer to Him to enlighten and

protect Sophie, are strangely at variance with the religious opinions Mirabeau expressed at other times. Nor can it be supposed that, in what he regarded as his dying message to her, Mirabeau feigned beliefs he did not hold, merely to comfort Sophie, for he had long since indoctrinated her with his own scepticism, and she had as little belief in God, as little hope of a future life as he.

Since his words have a ring of sincerity about them it seems likely that they are an illustration of Clough's dictum, that

> ' Nearly everyone when age
> Disease or sorrows strike him
> Inclines to think there is a God,
> Or something very like Him."

At this point it will be well to say a little on Mirabeau's religious opinions. For orthodox Christianity, as it was believed and practised in France in his day, he had nothing but contempt. Every priest, he said, is either a dishonourable man and a good priest, or a bad priest and an honourable man ; his meaning being that, since he could not credit any of them with really believing what they professed to believe, those priests who performed their functions faithfully while concealing their unbelief were dishonourable, whereas those who openly avowed their scepticism were necessarily bad priests though honourable men.

He told Sophie he hoped she would never become a devotee or, as we might say, find religion, for he held that all apparently devout people were hypocrites, and unfortunately the lives of too many outwardly orthodox and devout people in his days gave considerable reason for this suspicion. True believers, he said, are in

fact either credulous ignoramuses or interested hypocrites, or clever adventurers or dangerous enthusiasts.

His views on the future life may be gathered from the following extract from a letter to Sophie, written just after he had been to mass—

> "Alas! said I, during this silly ceremony whose formulas I heard droning, if I were the sort of man to make myself believe the dreams of the pious, I would convince Sophie so that we might die as soon as possible. Then our separation would end and we should rejoin one another in places where our hearts would be for ever united, and where death, persecutions, absence, misfortunes, would no more trouble our eternal happiness. . . . But, darling, we are not happy enough to console ourselves with such illusions; at the moment we have done with this life it is all over with us, and surely we need this opinion to make us endure life; for the fear of losing our love is the only feeling which can give life any value to us."

Another extract will show what he thought about God:

> "Polytheism, absurd in the eyes of the philosophers, is hardly more so than any other religious system. . . . At bottom one must agree that the unity of God will never be the religion of any nation; this doctrine pure and simple will never be comprehensible to the common people, and in every country of the world the generality of mankind make themselves a god or gods after their own fashion, or after that of the priests interested in complicating beliefs and practices. . . . Everyone has the right to follow his own judgment in the matter of doctrine, provided his conduct is otherwise absolutely conformable to the laws which are a protection to all.
>
> "I know the great argument of the intolerant pious. It is absurd, they say, to oppose the frivolous and temporal interest of civil society to that of salvation and life eternal. . . . He (the civil magistrate) ought to leave to the supreme being the care of his glory and the establishment of his law, if it be true that the creative

power can desire and demand worship from feeble creatures who form so imperceptible a point in the immense chain of his works."

Elsewhere speaking of God he says—

"I know nothing about Him, and it does not much matter, for I am assured it is impossible to know more of Him than I do."

And again—

"I do not believe in a remunerating God, but I believe in God."

These words indeed are not the words of a professed atheist, but they are certainly not those of a convinced Christian ; they suggest rather that if Mirabeau had any religion at all it was Deism.

CHAPTER IX

THE PRISONER (III)

If the Marquis de Mirabeau did not believe in the reality of his son's sufferings, Sophie did. So firmly convinced was she that if his life was to be preserved he must be released from prison that she was willing to make any sacrifice to secure his liberty. Accordingly she decided to write to her husband and ask him to take her back. She had always felt the greatest repugnance to return to M. de Monnier, but if such a course would save Gabriel's life she was willing to pursue it.

Before taking any steps she consulted her mother ; and Mme. de Ruffey, who knew that the Marquis was completely under the thumb of his daughter, Mme. de Valdahon, to whose interest it was to prevent any reconciliation between her father and his wife, warned her that the plan was not likely to succeed. Still, Sophie decided to make the attempt, and wrote her husband a very humble, penitent, piteous letter, imploring his forgiveness and asking him to take her back.

But the upshot was, as Mme. de Ruffey had foreseen, and M. de Monnier turned a deaf ear to Sophie's entreaties.

Later in the year, when she informed Mirabeau of her plan of returning to her husband, if he

would receive her, he did not oppose it, but insisted that as a preliminary the Marquis de Monnier must get the sentence passed on his wife cancelled. Their long captivity was telling on them both, and both were beginning to feel that the first thing needful was liberty.

So far they had no intention of renouncing one another, but were ready to make very large concessions to obtain their liberty. After they were free, Mirabeau believed that they might contrive to meet, though not for a time. But when once they had met it would be no difficult matter to arrange other meetings. Whatever their relatives might say, and whatever conditions they might impose, Mirabeau did not believe that they really expected him and Sophie never to see one another again. "You don't believe," he wrote to her, "that it will be within human power to prevent me seeing you again if I receive my liberty."

While Sophie was making tentative advances towards her husband, Mirabeau was beginning to consider the possibility of reunion with his wife.

If the death of his son was not a great sorrow to Mirabeau, to his wife and his father it was an overwhelming blow. Victor was a precocious, attractive child, and is thus described by his great uncle, the Bailli: "The poor little fellow would not have resembled the maniac who begot him. He was reason and sweetness incarnate; there was never any need to tell him the same thing twice if it was anything that mattered at all." To his mother the child was very dear; to his grandfather he was "the last hope of our name".

The Mirabeaus always suspected that he had

been poisoned. The Marquis had from time to time received anonymous letters, warning him not to leave the child in a district "where he was the only barrier against the great hopes of people in bad repute". The people referred to are obviously Emilie's aunts, whose descendants would inherit the Marignane fortune if Emilie died childless.

That the little boy was poisoned, there is no proof—for the suspicions of writers of anonymous letters are very poor evidence; all that can be said is that, if he was, the known cupidity of his mother's relations would render them suspect, since the child's death was so much to their interest.

Emilie, after Victor died, was anxious to go and live with her father-in-law, and the Bailli, less harsh and headstrong than his brother, took the opportunity of putting in a plea on Mirabeau's behalf.

"People persist in thinking you are a little hard on your own family," he wrote. "Don't you think that you might hint to this young woman that she cannot make her home for long with you, unless she is rejoined to her husband? As for him, in this country whose soft-heartedness you know, people will be saying that his affair is only an escapade, that if he has abducted a woman, it is a youthful folly pardonable at his age, for you know the morality of Babylon."

The Marquis remained unmoved: "Let people accuse me of prejudice, harshness, persecution, vengeance," he replied. "I shrug my shoulders at it."

In the end, Emilie did not go to reside with her father-in-law, for her father, who was much distressed by the loss of his old friend and com-

panion, the Count de Valbelle, persuaded her to make her home with him. So the Bailli's well-meant attempt came to nothing, and Mirabeau had still to wait nearly two years for his release.

Meanwhile the "good angel" did his best to make his daily life bearable. He procured for him a literary review "L'Esprit des Journaux". His food was better than of yore, and he was allowed the help of an amanuensis in writing his books: and a little later, thanks to Le Noir, he was also allowed a private garden in which except at meal-times he walked all day.

In March, 1779, Boucher discovered that he and Sophie had been practising a deceit. In the letters which they were allowed to exchange with one another they had written private messages in citron juice which only became visible when held to the fire. Boucher's suspicions had probably been aroused by the spaces Sophie left blank between the words and the lines, and he discovered the trick. Naturally he was annoyed with them for thus taking advantage of his good nature, but being a "good angel" he was not hard to placate when Mirabeau solemnly promised that he and Sophie would never, never, do such a thing again—a promise, sad to relate, they did not keep.

In the May of 1779 the Bailli, undeterred by the ill-success of his former attempt, made another effort on his nephew's behalf. He wrote to Boucher and suggested that Mirabeau should himself write to his father, making his submission to him. This Mirabeau consented to do, and since Boucher felt uncertain what sort of reception such a letter might get he induced Le Noir to write a covering letter to the Marquis.

Mirabeau's letter was humble enough in all conscience, as a few extracts from it will show—

> "My father, I feel the duty and need of asking your pardon for my faults, and it is from the bottom of my heart I bitterly regret the griefs they have caused you. . . . I am far from wishing to excuse myself; on the contrary, I write to you with the conscience of a criminal who begs mercy of his judge. . . . I promise you, I swear to you, that my most ardent desire is to repair the griefs I have caused you, and never to augment them. If I break this oath I shall not have the least title to anyone's indulgence, and you will assuredly have the irrevocable right to punish me for ever."

Humble, almost servile, as this letter was, it made no impression on the Marquis, who did not deign to answer it, but contented himself with sending Le Noir the briefest and curtest acknowledgment of his letter consistent with common civility. The Bailli, however, did not despair, and wrote to his brother pointing out that the people of Provence were distressed at seeing "one of their best and strongest stocks on the eve of perishing".

This was an astute move on the Bailli's part, for though the Friend of Men had little or no natural affection for his children as such, he had a regard for the family and a great desire to see it perpetuated. The death of little Victor had been a severe blow to him, because it threatened the family with extinction. Now the obvious way to secure fresh heirs was to reconcile Gabriel and his wife. That the Marquis was not blind to this is clear from the answer he gave to his brother.

While refusing to take any steps to release his son, he said: "As to his wife, I have always said and thought that she alone could do any-

thing in the matter, for she alone has the right." This presumably meant, and was intended to mean, that if his daughter-in-law demanded her husband's release he would not oppose it, but the initiative must be hers.

Here was a glimmer of light for the prisoner at last. From this point the negotiations for Mirabeau's release became very complicated. Sophie, knowing that he contemplated an attempt to induce Maurepas to liberate him in spite of his father, and thinking this would be a false step, actually wrote to the Marquis herself, and thought of writing to the Countess de Mirabeau, but Boucher dissuaded her.

Mirabeau seems to have got wind of the fact that Maurepas was weary of the constant demands the Marquis de Mirabeau made upon him. The Minister's state of mind is shown by a remark he made to his brother-in-law, the Duke de Nivernois: "Here's sixty letters or orders for the Mirabeau family. A special secretary of State is needed for them . . . the father takes me for his man of business; is it not shameful to see no end to the scandals of the family?" But Mirabeau made no attempt to approach the Minister at this time—perhaps because he thought that ere long the efforts of Dupont de Nemours might induce his father to release him.

Dupont, who was about ten years older than Mirabeau, was both his friend and his father's, for he was an adherent of the economists and had been in office under Turgot. He was a cautious man, and recognized how difficult was the task he had undertaken of trying to reconcile the father and the son; his extreme caution sometimes led Mirabeau unjustly to suspect him

of "sacrificing the persecuted to the persecutor". He it was who persuaded Mirabeau to write to his wife, assuring him that she alone could procure his liberty.

That Mirabeau found the task a hard one is clear from the manner in which he executed it. He wrote—

> "We cannot, Madame, have been intimately connected and become absolutely strangers to one another. I believe I have given you proofs of a soul which you ought to esteem. I have since done wrongs, which I do not wish to palliate, which I have perhaps expiated as much as they ought to be. Are you dead for me? Do you think me dead? If you remember him you loved, you cannot be ignorant that amidst his greatest ebullitions a favour is a sacred chain for his heart. I do not ask you to interest yourself in my lot, to give me back existence; I can, however, expect it only from you, and I have reason to think my father would not refuse it. By writing to you on this subject I show clearly I am capable of being grateful for what you may do. If in this position you prescribe nothing to yourself, I have nothing to say to you; but if you do it you will acquire over me rights which it would be always a pleasure to me to respect. We have lost my son: it is a great grief to me: I know it has been a great one to you. Has this sad event broken every link between us? I would fain not believe it; since we have both been equally and profoundly afflicted by it: I imagine that at bottom you do justice to my character and sentiments."

The Countess' reply was tantamount to a refusal—

> "I admit, sir," she wrote, "that I have not had the strength to inform you of the sad event which has plunged me in grief; I have judged the effect it would make on you, especially in your situation, and I have left to your father the care of informing you of our common misfortune. As for me, nothing can close the wound that the loss of my child has made in my heart.

My grief has been increased by the habit I had formed of never letting him out of my sight.

"I feel perfectly, sir, the horror of your position. But you have unfortunately put me in the position of not being able to make common cause with you by quoting me in your printed memorial in a manner very vexatious to me. I am then, sir, to confine myself to desiring your father to do what you wish of him; and although I could not co-operate to your happiness I should be charmed to know you happy."

On the heels of this letter came the news that the Marquis de Marignane intended to obtain a separation for his daughter, if Mirabeau was set at liberty. Here there was a deadlock —the Friend of Men was only willing to agree to his son's return as a means of reuniting him to his wife; and his wife was only willing to agree to it, provided she did not have to live with him. But Mirabeau had no intention of letting the Marquis de Marignane and his daughter have things all their own way; he would be willing to agree to an amicable separation but not to a legal one, and he possessed a weapon he could use with dire effect against his wife—the letter which plainly showed she had been guilty of infidelity.

As long as Mirabeau remained a prisoner, however, his wife and her father took no steps to obtain a separation—they had no need to do so; and although Dupont continued to visit him, and to make suggestions, Mirabeau's release seemed no nearer. Month after month went by and his life continued much as before, save that his sight grew worse and worse. "I am becoming blind, literally blind," he exclaims in one of his letters, but none the less he worked on at his literary undertakings, such as his translation

of Boccacio, and a romance called *My Conversion*, by which he earned money to send to Sophie for the support of their child.

Though Boucher had obtained him certain alleviations, his wardrobe was in a terrible state, and he had to go with his feet bare in his shoes because he had no stockings. Still, though his liberation was long delayed, he did not despair and could write to Sophie: "I love life since I have recovered the hope of finding myself in your arms again."

During the summer of 1779, Sophie had received visits from a M. de Rancourt, a youth of nineteen, which caused Mirabeau to be foolishly and furiously jealous. This young man, who came to the convent to visit its Spiritual Director, Father Maillet, took the opportunity of visiting Sophie also, in her own room. When Mirabeau expostulated, she replied that it was not her fault—an excuse which did not satisfy him. "People don't receive a man in their own room against their will," he wrote, "so in any case it will be your fault if you receive him there . . . it is not that I do not read to the bottom of your heart, but you ought not to shilly shally about things of this kind."

It was a long time before Sophie could convince Mirabeau that his jealousy was groundless; his long and wearisome confinement added to his bad health no doubt made him touchy and suspicious.

In September another incident happened to cause Mirabeau anxiety. His brother, Boniface, had been boasting not only that letters had passed between himself and Sophie, but that he had actually been to Gien in disguise and visited her. During their interview, Boniface

said, Sophie had revealed to him the secret of her correspondence with Mirabeau.

To this story Sophie emphatically gave the lie. "The Chevalier de Mirabeau," she said in a letter to Boucher, "is apparently an odious monster who is trying to compromise me, and irritate his father. I have not written to him. I have received nothing from him. I have not seen him. He has not come to Gien. It is all a story he has made up himself."

The truth seems to be that Boniface had been playing truant, and to explain his absence from home had concocted a romance about a visit to Sophie at Gien. Boniface was a rather worthless sort of person, with all his brother's vices but not half his brother's ability; he was, moreover, a drunkard, which Gabriel was not. Indeed, the one redeeming feature of Boniface's character was physical courage, for he distinguished himself by his reckless bravery in the American War.

The months went by, and still Mirabeau remained a prisoner, and there seemed to be a sort of perpetual check. His father would not make any move. "I have pardoned the offence that is personal to me as completely as I could have done in my dying hour," he told Dupont; and when Dupont asked why he did not then release him, he answered: "It relates only to the kind of safeguard I owe his wife."

Mirabeau therefore determined to appeal once more to his wife and her father, and he did so in the humblest manner possible—

> "My health is very bad; I am tormented to the utmost with the kidney trouble, to which you have in the past seen me subject, attacked with gravel, menaced with stone and I am losing my eyes: it is

impossible to cure me here. The Commandant of the Château, with the permission of the Minister and the magistrate, has seen my father and informed him of my condition. My father has replied that on you only depends my liberty (and, in consequence, my life): that he would refuse nothing you asked, and he would take nothing on himself that you might not desire. I find myself, then, entirely at your mercy and your father's, and I congratulate myself on it because he has loftiness of character and generosity, and you have humanity, sensibility and nobility of mind."

His letter to his father-in-law is if possible even humbler and more cringing—

"I only consider," he says, "what I think my duty to manifest to you my repentance for the real wrongs I have done, and to show you in imploring your help how much esteem and respect I have for you. To beg pardon of men is to treat them like God himself, and God never refuses it to those who ask him. . . . The two families to which I belong, my two fathers, have good cause to be irritated with me. I know them too well to believe that they are disposed in cold blood to condemn me to a painful and cruel death."

These letters had no effect; for no doubt the Marquis de Marignane was no more deceived than we are by the praises which Mirabeau lavished on him. He knew quite what Mirabeau really thought of him and his daughter, and was not to be cajoled by flattery into taking any steps to secure the release of a man who once at liberty might cause them trouble and interrupt the easy tenour of their frivolous existence. But for her father, Emilie it seems would have been willing some time before to consent to Mirabeau's release, though she was still waiting for her father-in-law to take the first step.

Meanwhile Mirabeau's opinion of Dupont was constantly changing. At one time he writes:

"This man has belied the opinion I had of him"; at another: "I told him I did not believe in his good faith"; and at yet another: "He has given so many proofs of his most inflexible frankness". The truth is that Dupont was doing his best; but he was dealing with very difficult people, and it was no fault of his that the negotiations for Mirabeau's release were so long drawn out.

Perhaps the turning-point really came with the death of Sophie's child in May, 1780—at any rate, so the Marquis thought. "This fellow's lucky star," he said, "has killed his child." As long as the child lived, she formed a link between Mirabeau and Sophie, but once she was dead, he found it easier to face the fact that his release could not be accomplished unless he renounced Sophie: and although he could not simply leave her to her fate, but was determined to work for her release and the quashing of the sentence against her, he was prepared to give up all idea of resuming their old relations —never again, he saw, could they live together as they had in Holland.

In a tender and beautiful letter which Sophie wrote to Mirabeau soon after her child's death we have proof that he was not dealing openly with her. "My tender love! You say that we shall have other children," she wrote. "Ah! how I wish it, but who knows whether we shall have this happiness? . . . Could you fear, oh! my all, that this event could change anything in my love? No, you are too sure of your sweetheart to suspect it. Before our secret correspondence, less assured of me you might perhaps have been able to fear it, but to-day, no, you cannot—this event unites us more than ever to

one another, if it is possible, for we find ourselves absolutely isolated. We have only one another in the world alas ! "

In the same letter there is a reference to a project which Mirabeau and Sophie had long discussed, of withdrawing to England and living in the country there. When he first suggested this scheme, Mirabeau may have been in earnest about it ; but by June, 1780, he must have come to the conclusion that it was not feasible ; and if he still referred to it in his letters and allowed Sophie to think that once they were free he would flee to England with her, he was beguiling her.

In another matter too he seems to have deceived her. He pretended that certain great persons at Court were interested in him, visited him in prison and were working for his release. These people are referred to discreetly in their correspondence as " les La ", " La et Lol ", and so forth, but Sophie certainly understood to whom these abbreviations referred.

Two of them can be identified with certainty, Mme. la Guêmenée and the Princess de Lamballe, though we cannot be equally sure who the others were. There seems, however, to be practically little doubt that the whole thing was a pure romance invented by Mirabeau, for had the Princess de Lamballe been violently in love with him as he pretended, she would speedily have obtained his release and used her influence to get him some lucrative post.

The fact is, Mirabeau was, as he admits, a born actor, and it amused him to pose as the beloved of a great lady such as the Princess de Lamballe ; so long as he had only Sophie for the audience of this little farce no great harm

was done, but when he acted it for the benefit of Mlle. de Dauvers he involved himself in serious difficulties. Maybe he first invented the story merely to give Sophie hope that their release would soon be achieved, but having once started he kept it up, and references to it occur over and over again in their secret correspondence during 1780, showing how utterly incapable he was of open and sincere dealing, even with the woman who truthfully described him as " her all ".

As time went by, and Mirabeau still remained a prisoner, the Marquis' tyrannical treatment of his son was commented on not only in France but in the foreign newspapers ; such criticisms, however, if they had any effect on the Friend of Men, were more likely to embitter than intimidate him.

Emilie, on the other hand, was beginning to relent, and though her friends kept assuring her that no one could desire a happier lot than hers would be if she were left a widow at six or seven and twenty with the prospect of inheriting an income of 60,000 livres a year, she told Mme. de Vence that if it rested only with her she would give her blood to procure her husband's immediate release.

Whether she was as anxious to see him at liberty as her words to Mme. de Vence imply may be doubted, but she did at last bring herself to intercede in his favour and wrote to tell him so on the 23rd of June, 1780—

> " I flatter myself, sir, that you do me the justice of believing that I am very far from desiring that you should remain in the unhappy situation in which circumstances have placed you. Your father knows what I think about that ; from the moment you think, sir, that my intercessions can help to secure your liberty

I am going to employ them with my father-in-law. I trust that they will not be fruitless and that your father may himself be able to render your position tolerable at last.

"Be persuaded, sir, that no one would see your happiness with more satisfaction than I should; and though circumstances have made it impossible for me to contribute to it myself, I none the less pray most sincerely to see you enjoy an existence as happy as you can desire. I pray you, sir, to doubt neither this nor the sentiments with which I have the honour to be your very humble and obedient servant

MARIGNANE DE MIRABEAU."

It will be noticed that while Emilie expresses her willingness to intercede with his father for Mirabeau, she has no intention of living with him again as his wife. On this point she and her father were equally determined, as is proved by the pledge which a little later the Marquis de Marignane extracted from the Marquis de Mirabeau: "I give you my word of honour that with my consent my son shall never approach your daughter, unless you have ordered or permitted it. Having arrived at the age of sixty-six without ever having deceived anyone, I shall not begin to be a perjurer at my time of life." Yet the sly old fox would have been well pleased if, after his release, Gabriel had boldly gone and recovered his wife by force!

That the Marquis intended sooner or later to release his son is clear from a letter he wrote to his brother, explaining his views quite frankly. As long as his grandson was alive, he said, he had intended to keep Mirabeau a prisoner; but little Victor's death and his own great desire for posterity had made him change his mind, for he had come to the conclusion "that the world would come to an end if fools did not beget

progeny". He seems also to have perceived that the plan he had once formed of keeping his son a lifelong prisoner, even after he himself was dead, was not feasible: "I have reflected," he said, "that the man will come out (of prison) as soon as my eyes are closed . . . in three months you would see him obtain letters of indemnity, break his creditors' bones and cut a figure at Versailles."

But though both his wife and his father were now willing that Mirabeau should be set at liberty, it was still some months before he obtained his release. The Marquis' ways were slow and tortuous: instead of immediately setting the prisoner free, as he could have done, he told his daughter, Mme. du Saillant, to engage Dupont to act as negotiator, while he himself kept in the background.

The entry of Mme. du Saillant into the intrigue has its amusing aspect. Hitherto Mirabeau had always regarded her as his enemy and spoken of her with contempt. He had complained to Le Noir that she and her husband were plotting to rob him of his inheritance, and it is probably to Mme. du Saillant he was alluding when he wrote to Sophie: "If there is a dullard in the family you will find her installed in the academic armchair and mistress of the house"; but when he found she was likely to be useful to him he wrote to her in the warmest terms—addressed her as his "dear sister" and spoke of her "generous and indulgent friendship".

From his correspondence with her we gather that his father was again thinking of employing Mirabeau as an intermediary, to try and effect some settlement of the long quarrel between himself and the Marchioness, who had a certain affection for her eldest son.

By October, the Marquis had got as far as thinking of ameliorating his son's lot somewhat by allowing him to spend his days in the Château of Vincennes, although he must every night sleep in the dungeon. This concession would at any rate have provided the prisoner with some congenial society. But still the Marquis was slow to move, and it was Mme. du Saillant who eventually wrote to Maurepas on her brother's behalf, with the result that on the 13th of December he was at last removed from the dungeon to the Château and thus obtained a partial release.

His brother-in-law, du Saillant, who was there to receive him, was deeply touched by the condition in which he found him, for he was " naked as a new-born babe ", and the first thing du Saillant had to do for him was to take him out into Paris to buy clothes.

CHAPTER X

JULIE DAUVERS

Even before his removal from the dungeon, Mirabeau had managed to scrape acquaintance with some of the ladies who inhabited the Château, for during the latter part of his imprisonment his confinement was in many ways less rigorous than it had been at first.

For the sake of his health he was allowed to take horse exercise, and though in a letter to Mme. du Saillant he talks of riding up and down a garden thirty paces long, this statement need not be taken too seriously. Mirabeau knew that his father would probably read the letters he wrote to his sister, so no doubt thought it best not to say anything which would show the Marquis that the authorities were granting his son privileges which he had not sanctioned.

It seems likely, then, that Mirabeau took his horse exercise in the grounds of the Château, which were fairly extensive, rather than in a garden thirty paces long. This, of course, he could not have done without de Rougemont's consent; but then, though he handles de Rougemont pretty roughly in his Essay on *Lettres de Cachet*, which he wrote during his imprisonment, and from time to time complains to Sophie of the Commandant's behaviour, there is plenty of evidence that during the last months of his

confinement at any rate Mirabeau and de Rougemont were on quite good terms; for the Commandant was well aware that his wife, a pretty brunette, some thirty or forty years younger than himself, had struck up a friendship with Mirabeau.

One might have suspected that this would have made de Rougemont jealous and suspicious, but it did not, for he allowed his wife to lend Mirabeau books and music and to send him presents of "scent and pretty things". Nay, more, when Mirabeau succeeded in reconciling Mme. de Rougemont with her relative, Mme. de Ruault, one of the inmates of the Château, with whom she had quarrelled, the Commandant thanked him for his good offices. This shows that Mirabeau had got to know some of the ladies who lived in the Château and that de Rougemont was aware of the fact.

His acquaintance with the Countess de Sparre began as early as the spring of 1780. One day, as the lady sat at her window making her toilet, she heard someone singing, and looking up perceived that it was Mirabeau, whose window overlooked hers.

It will be remembered that de Rougemont had had outside shutters fixed to the windows of the dungeon, to prevent the inmates of the Château and the dungeon seeing one another; it will also be remembered that Mirabeau complained that he could see nothing save a peep of the sky. As Mme. de Sparre could see him standing at his window singing, it would seem either that the shutters must have been removed, or that it was not at his own window he stood singing. Anyway, see him she did, and when he had finished his song she applauded.

A little later Mme. de Rougemont, either with her husband's connivance, or without it—we cannot tell which—brought Mme. de Sparre into the gallery of the dungeon in which Mirabeau was allowed to walk and introduced her to him. The acquaintance thus formed soon ripened, and Mirabeau and Mme. de Sparre began to send notes to one another, for he had persuaded the lady to convey letters for him secretly both to Sophie and to his cousin, the Princess de Berghes, who, be it noted, was an intimate friend of the Princess de Lamballe.

Now, though de Rougemont might be willing to wink at some irregularities, he was not disposed to allow Mirabeau and the Countess de Sparre to carry on a secret correspondence under his very nose. So one day, when the lady's servants were carrying notes from her to Mirabeau, he seized and imprisoned them. When Mme. de Sparre met him and protested against the way in which he had treated her servants, he seems to have lost his temper ; he hustled her, and accompanied by three musketeers pursued her to her own door. She hurried in and slammed the door in his face, whereupon he actually tried to force it open.

Mirabeau was highly incensed at the insult his friend had sustained, and threatened to demand justice of Parliament on her behalf—rather a quaint threat for a prisoner to make to his gaoler. Of course, he did not appeal to Parliament, but he did write to Boucher, and it was no doubt his intervention which caused the Minister Amelot to write an apologetic letter to Mme. de Sparre, asking her not to harbour resentment against de Rougemont for an excess of zeal, and assuring her that the Commandant had no intention of disobliging her.

Mirabeau's friendship with Mme. de Sparre is important, because people of note used to visit her at the Château—among them the Princess de Lamballe and the Princess de Guémenée. It is possible then that they may have visited Mirabeau in the dungeon. That some of the ladies of the Château did so is proved by the fact that de Rougemont imprisoned a sentinel for having admitted them. It may well be that the occasion on which he was caught breaking the rules was not the first time that the sentinel had broken them ; and if the ladies of the Château had from time to time visited the prisoner there is nothing impossible in the supposition that some of their friends may have gone along with them. That either the Princess de Lamballe or the Princess de Guémenée did visit Mirabeau in prison we have no proof, but when all the circumstances are taken into account it is impossible to be sure they did not ; they may easily have been introduced into the dungeon by Mme. de Sparre.

Mirabeau's tragic adventures and long imprisonment were a topic of interest in high circles, and it would not have been in any way strange if two great ladies had been moved by curiosity to pay a visit to so interesting a prisoner. This would be especially true of the Princess de Lamballe, for she must surely have heard about him from her friend, the Princess de Berghes, since they lived in the same house.

Yes, the Princess de Lamballe may have visited Mirabeau in prison, but if she did it affords no ground for supposing that the things he said about her to Sophie, and still less the things he said to Julie Dauvers, are true. What these things were will appear in the ensuing

account of Mirabeau's intrigue with Julie Dauvers, surely one of the strangest intrigues that he, or for that matter, any man, ever indulged in.

There was in the dungeon a prisoner named Badouin, a clever but unscrupulous man who had for many years been Master of Requests and had had considerable interest at Court. He had failed on rather a grand scale, for he had gone bankrupt for 1,000,000 livres, and since there were good grounds for suspecting that he had been guilty of fraud he was committed to the dungeon of Vincennes.

This man contrived to get into communication with Mirabeau—which was not really as difficult as one might have supposed, for Mirabeau had ingratiated himself with some of the turnkeys, and persuaded them to carry messages for him and do him other services which were against the rules. His method was simple if not exactly honourable. He began by promising to do great things for them when he was released, if they would fall in with his wishes, and once they had committed themselves by breaking the prison rules, threatened to denounce them to the Commandant if they did not continue to do what he asked them.

So it was through the agency of the turnkey Bertrand that the two prisoners first communicated with one another. Badouin, no doubt, was aware that Mirabeau would soon be set at liberty, and knowing that he had influence with Le Noir and Boucher probably hoped to get him to use his influence on his behalf to get his imprisonment made less irksome; if the police authorities had been willing to grant favours to Mirabeau, why should they not do the same to Badouin?

So a regular correspondence grew up between

the two prisoners. In the course of it Badouin frequently mentioned his former secretary, La Fage, a handsome, clever, young man, and La Fage's sweetheart, Julie Dauvers, hoping that Mirabeau, when released, might be able to do something for the young couple, as La Fage had been left stranded when his master became a bankrupt. So adroitly did Badouin praise the cleverness of La Fage and the charms of Julie that Mirabeau's interest was aroused, and since it always tickled his vanity to be treated as a great and important person, promised readily enough to obtain a private secretaryship for La Fage and to place Julie in the household of a "royal personage".

So far no great harm was done, for promises are as easily broken as made, especially when the person to whom the promise was given is a prisoner and likely to remain one. But at Badouin's instigation Julie herself wrote to Mirabeau, and this was the beginning of a voluminous correspondence which nearly led to disastrous results for Mirabeau. If at first he made promises merely because he loved to pose as a benefactor, later he seems to have been actuated by more interested motives. Julie's father was a man of substance, a surgeon-dentist with a practice among the leading people at Court, and it occurred to Mirabeau that if he could make the Dauvers believe he was going to be useful to them he might be able to turn their belief to his own profit.

Between the 22nd of October, the date of Mirabeau's first letter to Julie, and the 13th of December, when he left the dungeon, he wrote her no less than forty-two letters, besides writing a number to La Fage, who lodged in the Dauvers'

house; after his release until April, 1781, he continued to write to them both, though not as often as he had done while he was in prison. The correspondence contains one of the strangest comedies ever devised by man, and gives us a vivid picture of Mirabeau's astuteness, resource, inventiveness, and audacity, but alas! also of his unscrupulousness and his matchless talent for lying.

In the course of it his intrigue with Julie became a sort of Frankinstein's monster; he began it lightheartedly, probably merely to amuse himself, for he dearly loved an intrigue, was an inveterate actor, and had a passion for letter-writing. But as time went on he got entangled in his own deceptions; and the monster he had created, just for the fun of the thing, became his master.

At first he showed a certain amount of caution; he did not let Julie know who he was and referred to others vaguely or by pseudonyms. But later on he grew bolder, and told Julie not only his own name but that of the great lady with whom he hoped to place her. By so doing he was making a rod for his own back. In his earlier letters too he laid stress on the fact that he was acting purely as a friend, but he soon changed his tone, and, although he had never seen her, adopted that of a lover, warning her that she must keep his letters hidden from La Fage.

In a letter dated 11th of December we find him writing thus: "Little tempting demon, God forbid that Sophie should guess about you—she would come, I think, and tear your eyes out . . . whatever happens between us, she must never know." From such a man as a Mirabeau this does not read like the language of a disinterested friend.

Two days later he wrote: "I have loved much—ah, well! I have never loved anything more tenderly than you; my God, how lovable and attractive you are! . . . You surround me, you envelop me: I love you too much"; and again on the 22nd of December: "I assure you it is almost against my will that I love you with all my heart." When he wrote these last words Mirabeau and Julie had met, were indeed meeting frequently in private, so that it is hardly possible to believe that he still wished her to think of him as a friend and not as a lover.

What Julie felt about it all we cannot tell, for her replies to his letters have perished. Perhaps she was taken in, and thought Mirabeau was really in love with her; perhaps, being rather a shrewd young woman, she only thought it policy to pretend she thought so. But whatever her opinion about Mirabeau's professed love for her, she for a time entirely believed his promises to promote her interests. And small wonder, for Mirabeau was a most convincing liar.

In his earlier letters he had called the lady with whom he hoped to place Julie, Urgande, but later he dropped the mask and openly spoke of her as the Princess de Lamballe. To show how great his influence was in that quarter, and how easy it would be for him to do for Julie what he promised, he told her that the Princess was desperately in love with him—was, in fact, his mistress. He boasted that he had received four or five hundred letters from her, and from time to time had had assignations with her.

Was there any truth in his boasts? If there had been it would surely have been easy enough for him to secure the Princess' patronage for

Julie; but when pressed to fulfil his promises he was unable to do so. This alone is almost conclusive proof that he was lying; but, besides this, everything that is known of the beautiful, virtuous and unfortunate Princess de Lamballe renders it in the highest degree improbable that she and Mirabeau were lovers.

That he may have learned from the Princess de Berghes that the Princess de Lamballe, when she heard of his sufferings and long imprisonment, had expressed compassion for him, is probable enough; that she may have said that she was willing to use her influence to secure his release is not impossible; that she may even, in company with other ladies, have visited him in prison is conceivable. But that she was the sort of woman Mirabeau told Julie she was, and that her relations with him were what he affirmed, is utterly incredible.

It is strange to find that in his letters to the dentist's daughter, in which he is unwarrantably blackening the character of a virtuous and noble lady, Mirabeau from time to time gives expression to the most high-flown sentiments. "Honour, truth and love are my gods" is one instance; "No one can say I have failed to observe the strictest laws of honour" is another. If what he told Julie about the Princess de Lamballe was true, where was his sense of honour; if false, where was his regard for truth?

For a time Julie's belief in his promises was complete, but after a while, when nothing happened, especially after his release, she began to become suspicious, and Mirabeau was hard put to it to explain the delay. During the early months of 1781 he and Julie had frequent secret

meetings, and she no doubt, like everyone who came in personal contact with him, became the victim of his extraordinary powers of fascination; for, as his wife had said, he possessed a magic when he wished to enchant anyone.

But Julie was a level-headed, ambitious young woman with a keen eye to her own advantage, and as the weeks and months passed by Mirabeau found it harder and harder to allay her suspicions. Towards the end of February he sent her a letter which professed to be from the Princess; but Julie was not taken in by it, and to judge from what Mirabeau says in one of his letters to her, she had told him flatly that she regarded it as a forgery. "It is clear," he writes, "that you have the unworthy suspicion that the note I sent you yesterday was apocryphal."

He was in an uncomfortable position, for if he quarrelled with Julie he could not tell what use she might make of the letters he had written to her—letters in which he had said many indiscreet things about people in high places, notably the Princess de Lamballe. But, ever fertile in resource, he arranged for her to go to a masked ball where two people whom she supposed to be the Queen and the Princess de Lamballe spoke to her. That Julie believed she had talked to the Queen and Mme. de Lamballe is certain, but in view of the fact that nothing further came of it, it seems unlikely that she really did so.

It has been suggested that the people to whom she spoke were friends of Mirabeau, disguised as the Queen and Princess; and this suggestion is highly plausible. Since Mme. de la Motte succeeded in palming off a demi-mondaine

as the Queen on the Cardinal de Rohan in the famous diamond necklace episode a few years later, there is no reason why Mirabeau should not have played the same trick on Julie Dauvers. It is the kind of trick he would thoroughly have enjoyed—and, above all, it gained him a respite at a moment when the intrigue in which he had involved himself was becoming troublesome.

Throughout the episode his action is thoroughly characteristic of him ; he is reckless, mendacious, prodigal of promises, and for an apparently inadequate reason gets himself into a fix which might have had very serious consequences.

In his letters to La Fage there are several references to the game of chess—a game which presented no attraction to Mirabeau, and naturally, for the skilled chess-player looks far ahead and considers the consequences of every move; he works not for an immediate but an ultimate gain. Mirabeau, whatever grandiose view he might form of his own future, was always mainly interested in the next move; if he saw any immediate gain he clutched at it heedless of the difficulties in which it might land him, trusting to luck and his own ingenuity and audacity to get him out of it.

If Julie married La Fage and he lived with them in Dauvers' house, for a time he would have La Fage for an unpaid secretary and Julie for a mistress. Of course, the arrangement could only last as long as the Dauvers believed in his influence. What matter, it would serve his turn for the moment !

That Mirabeau had had some idea of making his home with the Dauvers for a time is proved by several passages in the letters. For instance, in a letter written to Julie on the 9th of December

and marked "for yourself alone" he writes: "Tell me if your good papa would have a lodging to give to me—a valet, a lackey, a postillion and a secretary; a lodging simple but decent. Tell me if your Gabriel, once your lodger, would not disquiet Saint Preux (*i.e.* La Fage). Tell me as my sister and my friend, what suits you and what does not suit you in this project." Evidently Julie's "good papa" was not altogether willing, for a few days later he writes: "I need you to say to me, darling—*My Gabriel, it is not for any reason personal to myself that I do not want you in my house*; or, the contrary, if it is the contrary."

Though Julie's meeting with the people she supposed to be the Queen and the Princess de Lamballe reassured her for a time, Mirabeau must have felt that the deception could not be kept up for ever, and in the last few letters he wrote to her there are indications that he was anxious to bring the intrigue to an end. Then suddenly, on the 10th of April, 1781, the correspondence ceased. But Mirabeau was not free of the consequences of it.

He had failed to persuade M. Dauvers to receive him into his house as a lodger, but he had succeeded in borrowing twenty louis of him. He had, however, had to give the dentist some kind of promissory note as security, and when the time for repayment arrived he was unable to meet it. Dauvers was not, it seems, a man to be trifled with, for he promptly carried his promissory note to the Connétablie, a court consisting of the Marshals of France with jurisdiction over nobles and officers, especially in cases where they had failed to keep their word of honour; he even went further than this, and

threatened to hand over to the Connétablie Mirabeau's letters to his daughter.

Had he done this, Mirabeau would have been an utterly ruined man. Luckily for him, his relations came to his aid, his brother-in-law advanced the money needed to discharge the debt to Dauvers, and his father took steps to see that the incriminating letters were safely buried in the archives of the police. So ended this strange comedy.

CHAPTER XI

THE END OF THE ROMANCE

After a brief sojourn in the Château de Vincennes, Mirabeau was allowed a fuller liberty and went to lodge in Paris, first with Dr. Fontelliau, and later with Boucher. Sad to relate, he made a sorry return for all the "good angel's" kindness to him by paying untimely attentions to the said "good angel's" wife.

It has been said that Mirabeau's treachery and ingratitude caused Boucher to die of a broken heart; but this we may take leave to doubt, for ill as Mirabeau had behaved, Boucher did not cease to befriend him, and Boucher's wife was by no means a lady of unblemished reputation when Mirabeau paid court to her. All the same, Mirabeau's ingratitude to Boucher is a dark stain on his character.

Even after his release from prison Mirabeau's lot was not an enviable one. He was still an outlaw, deprived of civil rights; he had no means of subsistence save what his father chose to allow him, he was up to the neck in debts he had no prospects of paying, he was not even allowed to use his own name, but was called simply M. Honoré.

He was at liberty, but what use could he make of his freedom? What his father hoped he would do was plain enough, for his chief reason

for releasing his son from prison was that he might rejoin his wife and raise up heirs to the house of Mirabeau. This, however, was easier said than done, for the Marignanes had wrested from the Marquis a pledge that Gabriel should not go near Emilie without her consent; and that consent she was not at all likely to give. But the wily old Friend of Men was not one to be deterred by trifles of this sort. Gabriel, he argued, had found a way to elope with another man's wife—why should he not find a way to elope with his own? He did not take into consideration that Mme. de Monnier was ready and willing to run away with Mirabeau, and Emilie was not.

Perhaps it was to clear himself of any suspicion of collusion, if Mirabeau should attempt to carry off his wife by force, that the Marquis refused to see his son for months after his release. But Mirabeau made no such attempt; maybe he thought it impracticable, maybe he feared that if he made the attempt and failed he would be landing himself in new and greater difficulties.

One might have supposed that as soon as he was at liberty Mirabeau would have contrived to visit Sophie, from whom he had been parted for three years and a half. That she expected him to do so is certain, for even before his release she had sent him a wax impression of the key of one of the doors of the convent at Gien, that he might get a duplicate made of it. Poor faithful little woman, she believed that, once free, he would be as eager to fly to her arms as she was to receive him.

After all she had suffered for him, after his repeated protestations of undying affection, how could she think otherwise? "He who says

'I have been in love' cannot pretend to have been in love as I have," he told her, "for were it so he would say 'I am' not 'I have been'. Loves that end are not ours."

This may have been true of Sophie, but it was not true of Mirabeau. His love had cooled; even in some of the letters written during the latter part of his imprisonment there are traces of peevishness and jealousy at one time of Rancourt, at another of Dr. Ysabeau. But as yet Sophie did not suspect the change that had taken place in her lover.

The letters she wrote to him during the months that immediately followed his release are full of details about the manner in which he could gain admission to the convent, and it is evident that to her mind this meeting was to be a prelude to their permanent reunion, for Mirabeau had encouraged her to hope that he would elope with her once more and carry her off to England, that happy land where there were no *lettres de cachet*, and from which your indignant parents could not have you extradited, to shut you up in a dungeon or a convent, because you had loved not wisely but too well.

In England she believed she would find peace and happiness such as she had never known, for she and her beloved Gabriel would live together in a cottage, like a pair of lovers in one of Rousseau's romances, lost to the world, its struggles and ambitions, wholly content in one another's love. And Mirabeau allowed, nay encouraged her, to nourish this fond delusion up to the time of his visit to Gien, though he knew well enough that even if he had ever regarded this scheme seriously, he did so no longer.

So it was Sophie who made all the plans, and

thought out all the details of his proposed visit to her. She suggested that Mirabeau should come before Lent, because it would be easier for him to get into the convent unobserved while the evenings were still dark. She asked him to send her a pair of his shoes so that she might have list slippers made for him " that they may not hear you walking here ".

But Mirabeau still procrastinated, and one after another of Sophie's plans came to nothing. He even seems to have suggested that she should return to her husband, but this she firmly refused to do. She told him that if it was not yet possible for them to flee to England together, she thought she might arrange to leave the convent and establish herself at a house in Gien where he could visit her, but return to Pontarlier she would not.

Dr. Ysabeau was in her confidence and prepared to help her in every way. She expected Mirabeau would stay some days with her when he came, for she was storing up food so that she might not arouse suspicion by asking for more provisions than usual; and Dr. Ysabeau contributed a ham to her private larder. Even the cautious Dupont was to some extent in the conspiracy, for he wrote to Sophie, saying, " do not fear that your empire over his soul is diminished ", and Sophie, writing to Mirabeau, told him that Dupont would be willing to lend him a horse for the occasion.

Dupont's readiness to connive at their meeting was probably due to his desire to see that Mirabeau did nothing too extravagant.

It was easy enough to understand the reasons for Mirabeau's procrastination. He was anxious if it might be to be reconciled with his wife, so

that the house of Mirabeau might not lack an heir; he was anxious to make peace between his parents; he was anxious to find a sphere in which he might employ the great talents he felt he possessed, and carve out a career for himself; besides, he was in the middle of his foolish intrigue with Julie Dauvers, and was soon involved in half a score of other intrigues equally reprehensible if not equally foolish.

Sophie belonged to the past, not to the future; and knowing that in any crisis her thoughts always turned towards suicide, he was anxious to avoid a violent or sudden rupture with her; he saw that a renewal of their former relations would frustrate all his plans for the future. He might write to her, and from time to time see her secretly, but he had no intention of sacrificing his career to her. He had said that she was less passionate than he, but he did not add, as he might truly have done, that she was also more tender, more self-sacrificing, more faithful.

At last, after many delays and postponements, the long-planned meeting took place—chiefly, it is to be feared, because Mirabeau wanted to be absent from Paris for a short time, as he was afraid that he was about to be arrested at the suit of M. Dauvers.

In his life of his adopted father, Montigny gives the following account of Mirabeau's last meeting with Sophie—

> "He (Mirabeau) set out alone stealthily during the night of the 3rd July, 1781, and came post-haste to Nogent-sur-Vernisson (three leagues from Gien). There he found Dr. Ysabeau, who led him secretly into the summer house of a garden at the upper end of and outside the town of Gien. There Mirabeau assumed a pedlar's clothes and pack; in this disguise he was introduced

into the interior of the convent by M. Ysabeau accompanied by a nun, whose assistance he had secured with Sophie's approval, so as to have a witness in case of accident or indiscretion: all three reached Sophie's cell without accident; a long interview took place in the presence of the two faithful friends who did not withdraw for a single moment: the explanation was tempestuous.

"Mirabeau affirmed with violence facts of which he was not sure. Sophie defended herself with energy, and allowed herself to be led into making vehement recriminations, for she also had had revelations and probably proofs; on both sides anger passed all bounds: 'in love anger is always mendacious'.

"The two lovers parted equally irritated; and Sophie was all the more so because she did not really deserve reproaches: at least we feel sure of it, from the evidence which has been given to us to the same effect by the Venerable Dr. Ysabeau and his companion the nun, Sister Louise, who is alive at the present time (1831) and still attached at the age of 82 to the same house, which has become the hospital of the town of Gien. Since this decisive day all relations even by letter were irrevocably broken."

Could anyone wish for a more circumstantial, or apparently a better attested narrative? It is in fact, the story told by "the two witnesses", Dr. Ysabeau and Sister Louise, and Montigny adds in a note that the former had given him "an account written by his own hand".

Were the account true, we should feel that the tragic love affair of Sophie and Mirabeau came to a sordid end in a vulgar squabble. But the evidence is overwhelming that there is hardly a word of truth in the whole story. Dr. Ysabeau was eighty, and sister Louise eighty-two, when they gave Montigny the information on which his account is based: fifty years had elapsed since Mirabeau had visited the convent at Gien, and the memories of the old are apt to become

confused, especially about dates and the order in which events happened in the far-off past.

There is no reason to suppose either that they were deliberately lying, or that Montigny deliberately misrepresented what they said; so that the strangely distorted version of the facts they gave can only be accounted for by supposing that their memories played them false. That the Doctor and the Nun told the same story really proves nothing, for in the course of fifty years they had no doubt often discussed the matter together, and perhaps had helped to convince each other that the love story of Mirabeau and Sophie had come to a sudden and melodramatic close.

In his *Recollections*, which were published in 1902, long after his death, Ysabeau states that Mirabeau remained fourteen days in the convent at Gien; this, of course is not correct, as is proved by Sophie's letters, but since it contradicts what he told Montigny, it shows that Ysabeau in his old age was not a reliable witness. He is wrong about the date at which Mirabeau went to Gien; he is wrong about the length of his stay there; he is wrong when he represents him leaving Sophie in anger with mutual reproaches and recriminations, and he is wrong when he says that from that time all correspondence between them ceased. The proof that he is wrong is to be found in Sophie's own letters, written be it remembered at the time, and not fifty years later.

Now let us see what actually happened. On the 27th of May, Mirabeau left Paris, and was met at Nogent-sur-Vernisson by Dr. Ysabeau, who took him in his carriage to a garden he had near the convent, where he concealed him in an arbour until he could be introduced into the

convent under cover of night. Exactly how he entered the convent is uncertain.

Dr. Ysabeau says that the gardener, Lafleur, let him in at the main gate at seven o'clock ; but this seems improbable, since at the end of May it would still have been broad daylight at that hour, and, as we have already seen, Dr. Ysabeau's reminiscences are not to be trusted. Others say that he got in at the main gate disguised as a pedlar or in female attire. But since we know that Sophie's friend, the nun Victoire, had stolen one of the Abbess' keys, it seems more likely that Mirabeau used this key to gain admission through a side gate after nightfall.

One thing however is certain, that somehow or other Mirabeau did get into the convent and reached Sophie's room unobserved by any of the inmates except maybe Victoire and Lafleur, who were in the secret. In Sophie's dressing-room was a large wardrobe in which she could conceal her lover if anyone came to visit her ; and as she had laid in a plentiful stock of victuals it was possible for him to spend five days with her without his presence being found out.

The secret of Mirabeau's journey had been discovered by his creditors, who spread a report that he was going to elope with Mme. de Monnier again. This naturally caused his friends anxiety, so Dupont and Du Saillant set off in pursuit of him. Since the Marquis de Mirabeau was prepared to take steps to recover the inconvenient letters which Mirabeau had written to Julie Dauvers, and Du Saillant himself was willing to pay his debt to M. Dauvers, which had been the immediate cause of Mirabeau's flight from Paris, the runaway was content to return submissively with his brother-in-law.

There is no evidence that Sophie and Mirabeau quarrelled during the period of his stay, and even after his departure they wrote to one another now and then; but they never met again, and Sophie knew that the great romance of her life was over. Few sadder words have ever been wrung from a broken heart than those in which she wrote its epitaph: "They thought we could not live without one another, alas! my spouse, they were wrong."

In February, 1782, Mirabeau went to Pontarlier, where he gave himself up to the authorities and allowed himself to be imprisoned for six months in order that he might get the sentence passed on him and Sophie five years before quashed.

He succeeded in clearing himself of the charge of abduction, and eventually came to terms with the Marquis de Monnier, or perhaps we should rather say Mme. de Valdahon, with regard to Sophie. The agreement that they made was that Sophie should be deprived of all rights to her husband's property, but should receive back her dowry, and she was to remain at the convent at Gien till a year after her husband's death.

The terms were perhaps as favourable as Mirabeau could reasonably have hoped. Nor, since she had irrevocably lost her lover, was it any great hardship for Sophie to have to remain in the convent. She had won the affection of all about her, and the abbess, the nuns and Dr. Ysabeau did their best to make her lot as tolerable as possible. That she was sad at heart, and that her grief preyed on her health, was only natural, for she must have suffered cruelly when it became clear to her that, in spite of all she had done and suffered for him, Mirabeau had ceased to love her.

The Marquis de Monnier died early in 1784, and Sophie, who assumed the name of Marchioness de Malleroy, left the convent and went to live in a little house nearby, accompanied by the nun Victoire. Much of her time she devoted to succouring the sick and suffering, and she was often to be seen driving in a donkey carriage with a young maid-servant on her way to the houses of those she was helping. Thus she came to be regarded in Gien as a ministering angel.

She often visited the Châteaus of the neighbourhood, generally in company with her neighbour, M. Lecuyer, whose carriage was always at her service. When the gossips of the place saw Sophie and Lecuyer so frequently together, their tongues began to wag, as the tongues of ill-natured gossips will. But the friendship was perfectly harmless ; Lecuyer, who was old enough to be her father, saw that Sophie was sad and lonely, and tried to be kind to her, while she in turn was grateful for his sympathy ; that was all.

Another of her friends was M. de Poterat, an ex-cavalry officer, who was a widower and lived at the Château of Thou with his sister and niece. When for family reasons they had to leave him, Poterat took a house near Sophie's. He was consumptive and Sophie nursed him with the tenderest care and devotion. Although he knew he had not long to live he asked Sophie to marry him, and she consented. His motive for wishing to marry when almost on his death-bed was that he might leave her his property.

That Sophie was truly fond of Poterat there can be no doubt, but she did not love him with the passionate devotion with which she had loved Mirabeau. " One only really loves once,"

says La Bruyère, "our later loves are less involuntary." Yet we may be sure that Sophie found happiness in tending the sick body of a man so unselfishly devoted to her; but all her care and all her nursing could not postpone the inevitable hour, and on the 8th of September, 1789, Poterat died, after all the arrangements for their wedding had been made.

Sophie was with him when he died, and embraced his corpse in an agony of grief. It was with some difficulty that Dr. Ysabeau and his wife persuaded her to leave it and accompany them to their house. They were anxious for her to stay and make her home with them. But Sophie would not, and pretending she had domestic arrangements to make, insisted on returning home. She said she would come to them on the morrow if Dr. Ysabeau would call for her at nine o'clock in the morning.

When she got home she sent the servants and Sister Louise out, telling them that she intended to spend the day with a friend; apparently she gave them orders not to return till the next day. For the blow was more than Sophie could bear, and she was planning to put an end to her own life, as she had often before threatened to do in moments of stress.

On the evening after Poterat's death, she shut herself in a little dressing-room, and having carefully closed the door and window lighted a charcoal fire. She had learned from Dr. Ysabeau that people who attempt suicide in this way often open the door or window when they feel themselves suffocating, so she took the precaution of tying her arms and legs to the chair in which she sat, so that she might not in a moment of weakness or terror frustrate her own design.

At seven o'clock the next morning the 9th of September her servant entered her room, and not finding her in bed, looked into the dressing-room, where he saw her bound to the chair in which she sat apparently dead.

Naturally his first thought was that she had been murdered and he at once gave the alarm. Two doctors were hastily summoned, and they did all they could to restore animation, but it was in vain. So died the unfortunate Sophie de Monnier, the heroine of Mirabeau's great romance.

The way in which she put an end to her own life shews how well Mirabeau understood her when he said : " My love is not outwardly demonstrative, but her heart is a volcano : she will appear serene and tranquil a quarter of an hour before the catastrophe, which will happen none the less if she is reduced to despair. She appears to have all the timidity of her sex, but she truly has all the audacity of ours."

She had sinned much and suffered much ; but, with all her faults, she appears more to be pitied than blamed. Not every woman who sins as she did could plead such good excuses. Married when hardly more than a girl to a cranky, avaricious old man who was perhaps her husband only in name, she fell a victim to the seductions of a man notorious for his almost superhuman power to charm anyone he would. To her lover, for whom she bore poverty and exile without a murmur, she was ever tender, devoted and self-sacrificing. She was persecuted by her own parents, for surely the intention of the de Ruffeys to consign their daughter to a common reformatory shews a vindictive spirit.

She had the poignant anquish of learning that the man for whom she had sacrificed all

and endured all had ceased to love her, and when at last she had found a man who loved her with a truer and more unselfish love he was snatched from her by death. She was kind to the poor and the suffering, she was devoted to children, she won the affection and esteem of those about her. These are not the traits of a bad and depraved woman; and without condoning her evil behaviour, in deserting her husband for her lover we may admit that there was in her character much that was noble; beautiful and lovable.

EPILOGUE

During the eight years that elapsed between Mirabeau's last visit to Sophie and her death, he had led a chequered and eventful life.

He had seen the long litigation between his parents end in the ruin of both.

He had lost his own lawsuit with his wife, but by his conduct of his case had won himself fame as an orator.

He had gained a livelihood of sorts by writing pamphlets, now for, now against, the government of the day.

He had had many love affairs, and run up many debts.

He had visited England, and been sent to Berlin as a sort of unaccredited diplomatic agent.

But it was the summoning of the States General in 1789 which gave him his chance. Since his father would not take the steps which would have made it possible for him to sit as a noble, he sought to be elected as a representative of the "third estate"—or the commons, as we should say in England.

So marvellous was his eloquence, so great his popularity with the rank and file of the people, that two different constituencies elected him, and even before the States General met, it was recognized that here was a man to be feared and reckoned with.

At first he was distrusted and looked on with suspicion by all parties in the Assembly, but his great oratorical powers and his popularity with the mob soon made him one of the leading men, nay, the leading man of the revolution, for he possessed just the qualities which are needed by one who in troubled times would "mount the whirlwind and direct the storm".

He was at a session of the National assembly when the letter Dr. Ysabeau had written informing him of Sophie's death was given to him.

As he read the news his expression changed, and being unable to control his emotion he got up and left the Assembly in confusion, and did not resume his duties there for several says.

Perhaps, as Montigny suggests, he was reproaching himself for "having seduced an imprudent young woman and thus having led her by his evil courses to so unhappy an end".

Perhaps there rang in his ears the farewell words she had written to him a few days after their last meeting: "Good-bye, my very dear love—I love you as I always did."

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